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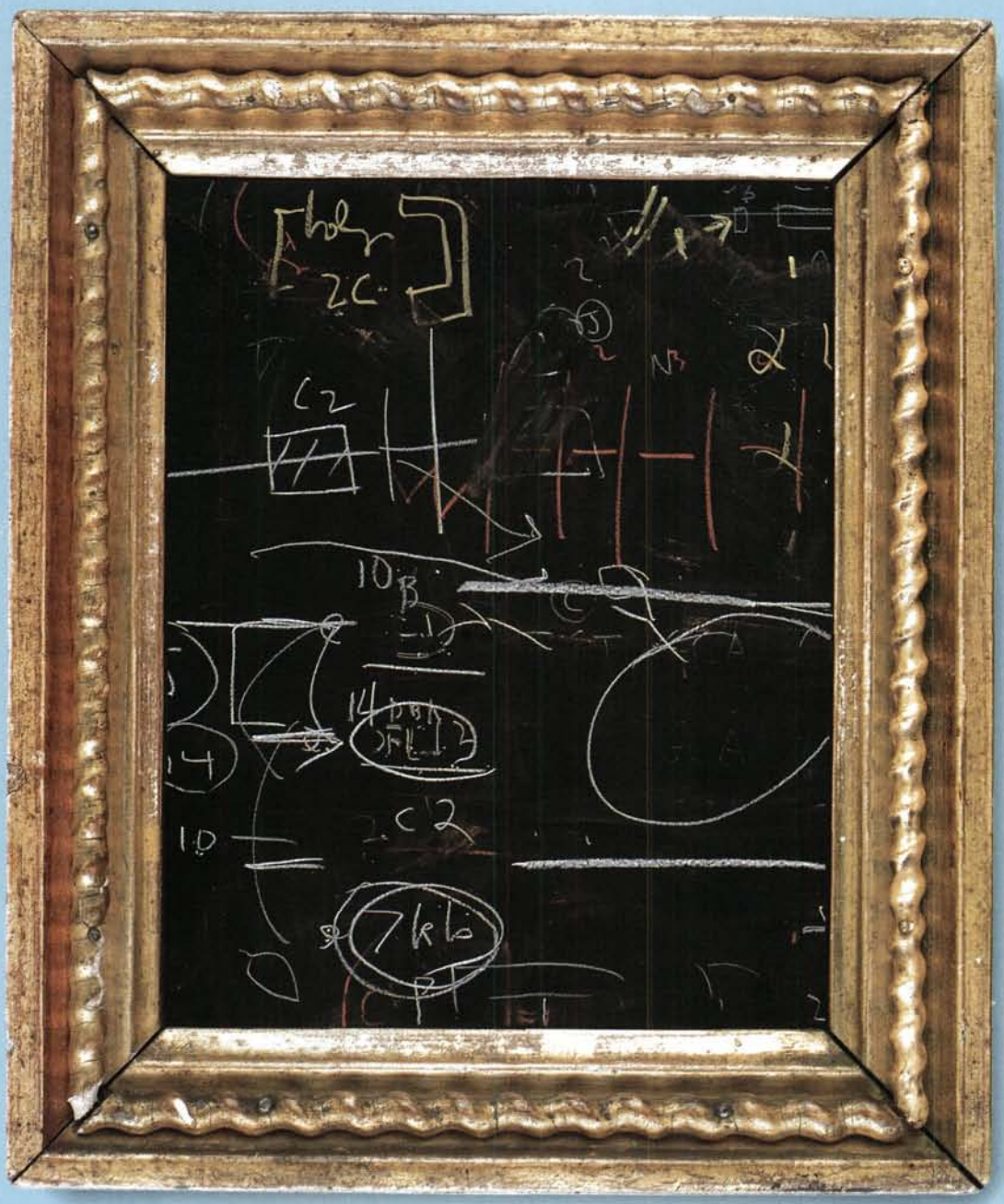

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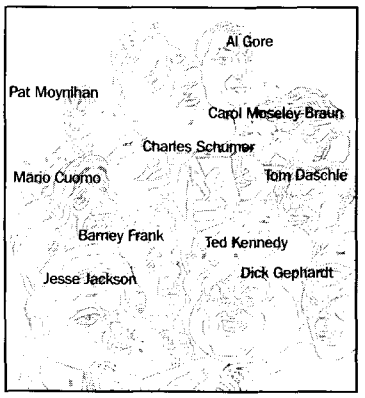

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Yes, It's the Quota Party

As Bill Clinton accepts his party's presidential nomination, he will look over a sea of liberal delegates who are 66.8 percent white, 18.9 African American, 9 percent Latino, 3 percent Asian-Pacific, and 1.4 percent Native American. A quick check of voting patterns also shows that the composition of the delegates in Chicago has an uncanny resemblance to the Democratic party's overall electorate. Coincidence? Not a chance. The bean counters at the Democratic National Committee long ago mandated that the racial and ethnic composition of each state delegation must be proportional to the ethnic and racial makeup of Democratic voters in the state. What's more, 50 percent of a state's delegation must be female. To make sure each racial and ethnic quota is filled, a pool of reserve delegates is on call—just in case a delegation is short a Latino or some other minority.

The enthusiasm for diversity was so great this year that the Florida state Democratic party put out a press release with a handy breakdown of each delegate's religion, age, race, occupation, and sexual orientation. One delegate, whom the press release named, is "retired, but works with underprivileged kids, gay and in a 20-year relationship." Turns out the delegate had told only a few people that he was gay and was shocked to learn that his own political party had outed him.

So the audience of delegates Clinton will address Thursday night will be constructed using the most liberal application of quotas while the president will stand above pretending to be an utterly different kind of Democrat. Welcome to Chicago.

Extra! Economists Like Tax Cuts!

Since Bob Dole proposed his economic plan, we've seen a resurgence of a hoary journalistic genre: the "most economists" story. In the current iteration, a journalist in question—Richard Stevenson of the *New York Times* or, most notoriously, Clay Chandler of the *Washington Post*—reports that "most economists" are scathing about the Dole economic plan. Well, now we have a firmer grasp on what "most economists" believe. William C. Adams of George Washington University surveyed 700 random members of the American Economics Association. It turns out that "most economists" are mild supply-siders. Eighty-one percent believe the Reagan tax cuts *increased* economic growth. More than half believe deficits in the 1980s were due more to growth in federal spending than to the Reagan tax cuts. The news isn't entirely sunny for Dole, though: Only 41 percent believe the Dole claim that "about 30 percent of the static revenue lost from a 15 percent cut in income tax rates would be recaptured by the resulting increase in economic growth." Even so, the survey provides evidence that most reporters are profoundly misleading their readers when they purport to describe what most economists believe. Are you listening, Clay Chandler?

Dan Quayle Was Right?

It was meltdown time in Republican World after The Daily Standard (a mini-version of this magazine we put out only in San Diego at the Republican convention and will issue in Chicago this week as well) broke the story that Dan Quayle intended to use pro-life language in his convention speech. When Quayle arrived at the convention hall to rehearse, he was immediately summoned to the management trailer behind the podium. There, he was pressured by former RNC communications director Chuck Greener and superlobbyist Ken Duberstein to remove both the abortion talk and some pointed attacks on the "extremism" of Clinton and the Democrats.

When the ex-veep resisted, RNC chairman Haley Barbour was contacted by cell phone to continue the pressure. "Haley," Quayle asked, "have you even read the speech?" Barbour said he hadn't, so Quayle proceeded to recite the six-minute address into the phone. Barbour said it sounded fine to him. Whereupon Quayle flung the phone at Duberstein and said, "Here, *you* talk to Haley. I'm going to practice."

Convention manager Paul Manafort then called the hotel and demanded to talk to Quayle about the speech. Quayle didn't take Manafort's call, and soon after he

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received another, this time from Dole campaign manager Scott Reed. In a very heated exchange, Reed informed Quayle he did not share Barbour's favorable opinion of the speech and expressed strong concerns both about the use of the word "extreme" and the talk about abortion. Quayle reluctantly agreed to replace the word "extreme" with "radical," but steadfastly refused to cut the pro-life section.

When Quayle arrived a few hours later to give his speech, he learned he was being moved forward in the speaking order to 5:45 p.m. (8:45 p.m. Eastern time), because the convention could not find scheduled speaker Steve Largent. A Quayle aide suspected a convention maneuver to deny Quayle a prime slot and helped his boss delay, dawdle, and otherwise take his sweet time getting to the podium. Quayle's speech began in earnest just after 9:00 p.m. Eastern time, the abortion reference intact.

No Big Dole Mo'

If the media have wanted you to know one thing about the campaign lately, it's this: Bob Dole's post-convention "bounce" in the polls doesn't mean much. This has always been true of such "bounces"—that they can be artificial and short-lived—but opinion-makers have bent over backwards to ensure that you understand it is *especially* true this time.

In the *Washington Post*, Richard Morin was exhaustively and ostentatiously dismissive of the "notoriously contradictory" surveys of the "convention season." He hauled out several experts to admonish gullible Americans to beware: We should "take a brief vacation from poll-watching" because these Republican-encouraging polls "are seductive." Morin is, by the way, a pollster. In the *New York Times*, Janet Elder warned, "The polls have to be considered in the context of a busy convention stretch, one that has not yet concluded."

All of this is of course correct—100 percent. But the media weren't nearly so punctilious last time around, when Bill Clinton departed his convention in Atlanta. "Convention Gives Bill Clinton a Big Bounce," ran a *Times* headline—the "greatest convention bounce in half a century." Wrote David S. Broder in the *Post*, "Judging from the 'bounce' [Clinton and Gore] got in the polls, the [convention] effort was a success." And that same Richard Morin began an article this way: "Did somebody say bounce? Michael Jordan should bounce so high. Bump? Redskins linebackers should bump so hard."

To be sure, all of these journalists issued caveats. But there was nothing like the cold water poured Niagara-like on the polls that followed Bob Dole's moment in the San Diego sun.

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Casual

Dr. Cummings Psychoanalyzes Me

Intellectuals love to talk about what an emotional medium television is, but it's hard to know exactly what they mean until you meet people who watch a lot of it. I finally understood one day this March when I went on a political show to discuss Ross Perot. During the program I made the point—in a subtle way, I thought—that Perot might not be all there, a few tacos short of a combo platter perhaps. At the time, it didn't seem like an outrageous thing to say. Understated, even. Others didn't agree.

By the time I got back to my office there were a number of angry messages on my machine. One stood out as particularly enraged—I could almost feel the woman shaking with fury as she spoke. I decided to return it, if only for nostalgic reasons. One of my first jobs in Washington had been as the Nut Mail Editor of a quarterly magazine. It was a self-appointed position—nobody else wanted to assume it—but in its own way a rewarding one. I took calls and answered letters from people upset over our editorial stands: conspiracy wackos, Libertarians, men with strange accents ranting about obscure ethnic conflicts ("I can assure you that the Kazakh people will not abide this blood libel . . . "), and so obsessively on. After a year and a half as NME, I thought I knew all about outraged callers.

So I called the woman back. She started yelling immediately. Who did I think I was? she wanted to know, and where did I get off saying something like that, and just how did I get to be such a repulsive, reprehensible person? I made a game attempt at answering, but she cut me off. You say Ross Perot is crazy? she screamed. "*You're* crazy."

How did she know? "I'm a psychologist." Her name was Pat Cummings, and she claimed to have a practice in suburban Maryland. *That's* how she knew I was crazy. And, she explained, not crazy in a good way. *Bad* crazy: delusional, vicious, sociopathic. Evil, really.

Well, I said, since you're a psychologist, you'll definitely want to get some treatment for that anger problem of yours. Then I signed off. Talking to Dr. Cummings was starting to depress me.

Not that I really believed her. A real psychologist wouldn't talk that way. No actual licensed Mental Health Professional would call a total stranger "crazy." What if I'd taken her diagnosis to heart and had myself committed? No, the more I thought about it, the less I believed her. Pretending to be a shrink must be the 90s version of a Napoleon complex.

Four days later, I ran into Pat Cummings again. This time she was staring at me from a monitor in a television studio where I'd shown up to talk about Ross Perot again. So, it turned out, had she. Only, as a cameraman explained, she had refused to share a set with me and so was doing the interview by remote from another studio upstairs in the building. "Pat Cummings, Ph.D.," I soon learned, was both a real psychologist and a Perot volunteer.

On-air discussion that night never touched on our previous chat, and though I wanted to reminisce, Dr. Cummings must have slipped out the back door because I never saw her again. Months went by and my memory started to fog. Could the genuine psychologist on television really have been the same person who called to scream at me? I began to doubt it, and before long Pat Cummings left my thoughts entirely.

The other day, she reappeared. Over breakfast last week, I was amazed to find Dr. Cummings lurking in the second paragraph of a David Broder column in the *Washington Post*. Identified as a "clinical psychologist and independent candidate for the Maryland legislature," Cummings was quoted extensively claiming that "Ross Perot is not crazy." "In fact," she assured Broder's readers, "he could be included in a study of exceptionally healthy individuals." Sounded like the same woman to me.

Still, I had to be sure. So I called her. She not only confirmed her identity but also her diagnosis of me: still crazy after all these months. As she explained it, I was "a person who lacks conscience and an ability to interact in a responsible and ethical way in this society." Just in case I didn't understand the textbook definition, she reduced it to layman's terms: "Look, I have no respect for you. . . . I think that you are a person of very low character."

Interesting, I said. May I quote you on that? Even over the phone line, I thought I could hear her mind begin to imagine the consequences: a trip to the professional review board, charges of irresponsible conduct, punishment. "Are you going to now try to cost me my license?" she demanded, sounding a shade less confident.

For once, an accurate diagnosis.

Tucker Carlson

cc: Maryland Board of Examiners of Psychologists

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The Lifestyle Police have kicked smokers out in the rain.

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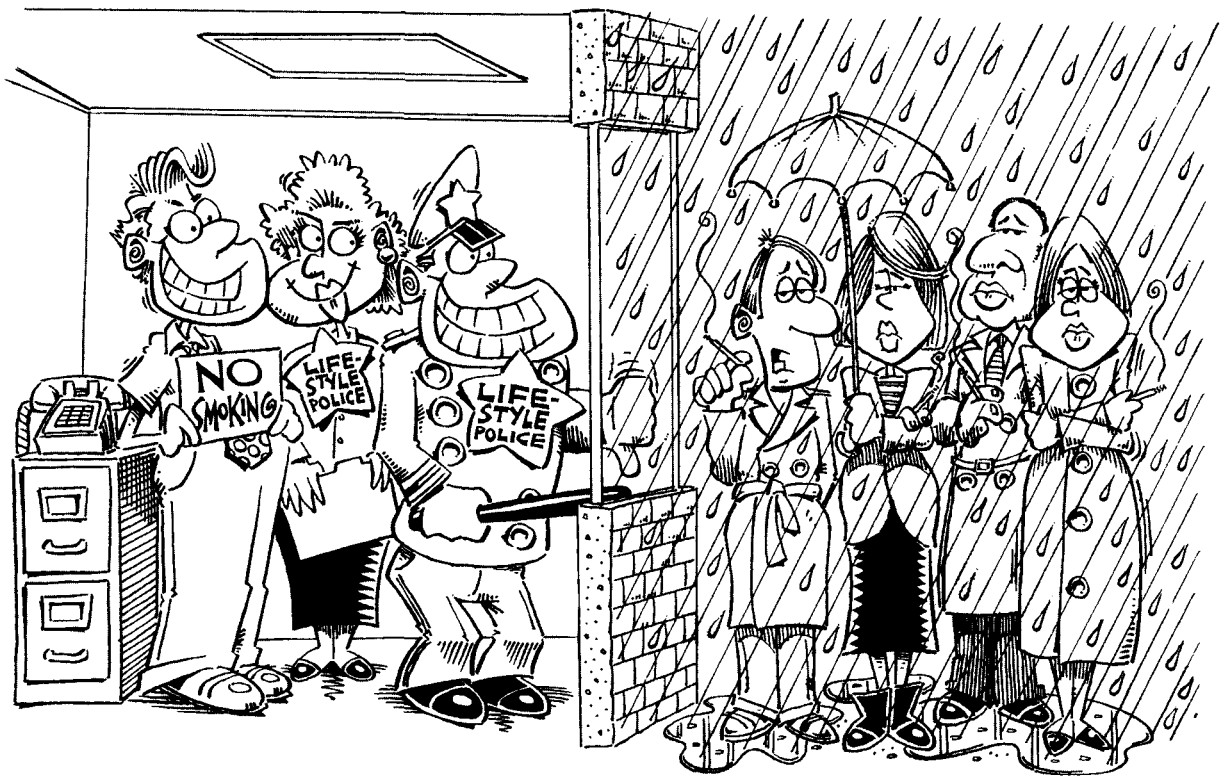

If you're a smoker, you've already met the "Lifestyle Police." You might live in a city where they've extinguished the right to enjoy a cigarette after a meal, at work or even in public parks.

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Correspondence

Libertarian Page of Outrage

In "Up from Libertarianism" (Aug. 19), David Brooks unfortunately (and entirely) misses the philosophical essence, the driving force, of Republican conservatism. Today, like it or not, the Religious Right and constitutional conservatives—the NRA/civil-libertarian coalition—are the driving forces. Dole, Kemp, and the Republican leadership will ignore these forces at their peril.

With the unifying message coming out of the Republican convention (and the expected punch of the Democratic counterpart), the swing vote will have clear-cut, well-defined choices. The question is whether the various factions of conservative grassroots movements (e.g., pro-Second Amendment citizens), who were responsible to a significant degree for the November 1994 congressional revolution, will be given enough incentive to vote for the Dole-Kemp ticket. The electorate behind these forces could very well sit this election out, or they can simply vote for Harry Browne, the Libertarian party candidate. If they choose the latter, they will sink the hopes of the Republican party's regaining the White House or even retaining the Republican majority in Congress.

MIGUEL A. FARIA, JR.
MACON, GA

David Brooks expertly explains the difficulties with libertarianism as a governing philosophy. In doing so, he may also have inadvertently put his finger on the real problem at hand. Libertarianism (as hijacked by the Republican party) translates into terrific campaign jingoism—"lower taxes, reduced spending, smaller government"—and has been fairly successful in exposing the failures of liberalism. It is, therefore, an irresistible election-year mantra. While occasionally dusted off in the interim, libertarianism is left largely for policy wonks, purists, and think tanks to kick around while Republicans tend to the matters of (increasing) government. It happened with Reagan (the revolution fizzled in less than two years) and Gingrich as well (minimum wage?). Thus, libertarians are forced to choose between two paths: either wait for their knight in shining armor to win office and remain faithful to the ideology, or, as Brooks points out, resign themselves to *some form* of conservative government to achieve *some form* of libertarian ends. With that being the case, most opt for the latter, keeping alive this vicious cycle.

NICK RAGONE
WESTCHESTER, NY

I think David Brooks's piece falls rather wide of the mark in its assertion that libertarianism, a philosophy for governing, cannot be established. The failure of the Republicans in the 104th Congress is not a failure of libertarianism. It is a failure of the Republicans to implement their agenda. There is a substantial difference.

Libertarianism goes beyond cutting the disliked programs. It is a belief in minimal government. The U.S. Constitution gives Congress the power to provide for the common defense and general welfare of the United States. It does not give Congress the power to provide or dictate the specific defense and welfare of every individual or interest group.

The idea that people want government off their backs is well established. For as long as most of us can remember, politicians have been "cutting government, waste, and taxes." Yet government grows larger and more expensive each year. We here in the real world have come to suspect that the well publicized "cuts" are more than offset by the "minor increases" elsewhere.

The Republicans presented an impressive list of agencies for elimination. Upon examination, transfer of responsibilities to other agencies might have been a more accurate description. Few of the cuts connected with the electorate—to cut something the electorate actually sees or feels is political suicide. To most, the activity was an exercise by people far away in a town few trust.

The government has been rearranged many times before, but the result never seems to be a reduction of government. According to a report by Citizens for Tax Justice, if there had been no changes to the 1977 tax code, nine out of ten American families would have paid less than they did under the tax code of 1990. And we have had two rather tidy increases since then. Seems our taxes have not been reduced, either.

Brooks says that while the country distrusts government, which is libertarian, people expect government to do something when things go wrong, which is not very libertarian. With the government demanding its current tax burden, it is understandable for people to expect something. If the government took less, people would expect less.

The Republicans of the 104th Congress failed to implement the cuts they sought. They also failed to offer the substantial tax cuts the public sought. But if a party were to propose administrative cuts along with tangible reductions in taxes, the public would very likely provide the support necessary for success.

DOUGLAS BEIJER
HERNANDO, MS

Country Music Stinks

I take issue with John Berlau's description of me as a "then-liberal" in his reference to my 1974 *Harper's* article in which I criticized Merle Haggard ("The Battle Over 'Okie From Muskogee,'" Aug. 19).

I was then what I remain today: an elitist conservative. I hate country music because it stereotypes Southerners as ignorant, maudlin hicks. This may be less true today than it was in 1974, but I don't change with the times. The rise of populist conservatism in the 90s has hardened my opinion so much that country music has become for me what Carthage was for Cato: I'll knock it anytime, anywhere, for any reason whatsoever. So call me a snob if you like, but not a liberal.

FLORENCE KING
FREDERICKSBURG, VA

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the weekly Standard

THE COVERAGE THEY DESERVE

On the final evening of the Republican national convention in San Diego, just before that business about someone accepting the party's nomination for the presidency of the United States, four distinguished senators shed their suit jackets to harmonize an *a cappella* barbershop version of "Elvira" in honor of Elizabeth Dole. It was yet another Regis-and-Kathie-Lee moment in the convention's week-long frenzy to persuade America that, shucks, the GOP isn't really very *political* at all. But "The Vocal Majority," as the singing senators fashion themselves, are an amateur act. Their performance was only a frolic.

The Democratic convention's centerpiece musical number, by contrast, comes courtesy of Hollywood bigfoot and Clinton crony David Geffen. He is shipping the entire professional cast of Broadway's hit show *Rent* to Chicago. The show's second-act anthem, "Seasons of Love," is the Democratic party's opening-night finale. And this performance is anything but a frolic. "We would not include 'Seasons' unless it were very, very meaningful," the convention's executive producer, Gary Smith, insists. How meaningful? This meaningful: The morning after the world's oldest political party advertises *Rent*'s big tune on network television, David Geffen's record label will begin selling the first 250,000 original-cast recordings of the show all across the country. Geffen expects the album to go double platinum.

Clever, no? And so emblematic of the entire Democratic convention, which promises to match and exceed anything the Republicans even attempted in San Diego by way of stage-managed and deceptive marketing. The American media have hammered at the GOP for the ideological subterfuge of its convention. Will our news hounds and talking heads maintain this steadfast watchdog role in Chicago, and protect an unsuspecting public from bucketloads of *Democratic* propaganda? They should, if only to make up for the credulous oohing and aahing with which they reported Clinton's "Man from Hope" routine four years ago in New York.

Inside his own party, President Clinton now holds all the political cards. He has rhetorically betrayed the Democratic party's liberal soul on questions of federal budgeting. He has actively betrayed the Democratic party's liberal soul by signing the most significant piece of social legislation in 30 years: a Republican welfare-reform plan that ends the federal government's basic entitlement for the poor. But since they lost control of Congress in 1994, a loss that is the president's fault more than anyone else's, Democrats must depend for their institutional survival on retaining the executive branch. So Clinton has enjoyed the first uncontested Democratic presidential nomination since Lyndon Johnson's. He has the Chicago convention locked down tight.

What Chicago might sound like has been obvious for weeks to anyone who bothered to read the party platform adopted by the Democratic National Committee after a *pro forma* three-hour hearing August 5. The conservative platform ratified by Republicans in San Diego was a rare spark of ideological life in an otherwise largely idea-vacant convention; the leftward half of American political argument will receive no such support in Chicago. The new Democratic platform stands where Clinton stands: wherever necessary, as determined by the polls. "Today's Democratic Party"—the phrase must recur a hundred times in 30-odd pages—offers "the end of the era of big government and a final rejection of the misguided call to leave our citizens to fend for themselves." In other words, today's Democratic party *is* the deliberately ambiguous Clinton presidency, nothing more. And it's a presidency the platform describes with a dissent-quashing, history-rewriting boldness that should make Haley Barbour green with envy.

Abortion? Pro-life Democrats like Reps. Tony P. Hall and William O. Lipinski wanted a platform plank explicitly acknowledging that some party members oppose *Roe* v. *Wade*. They got rolled. The final document does express "respect for the individual conscience of each American" on abortion, and a wish that the procedure be "more rare." But the rest of the plat-

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form's "choice" language makes clear these clauses are just for show.

The federal budget? Gone is any memory of Clinton's first tax-hike budget or the 1993 stimulus package. The Democratic party is now for no-new-taxes fiscal balance in seven years, just like Newt—only nicer. Health care? 1992's "right" to universal insurance coverage is a right no more. Democrats claim credit for the incremental insurance reforms that Republicans always supported and that Clinton once swore he'd veto. Mighty Morphin Power Rangers? Democrats oppose them. National security? "We have defeated attempts to cut our defense budget irresponsibly." Gay rights? Don't ask, don't tell. Republicans? They are cartoonishly evil, wanting to "take Big Bird away from 5-year-olds" and "destroy the food stamp and school lunch programs." Republican legislation on unfunded mandates, the line-item veto, and welfare reform? Those were good, Democratic ideas all along.

Needless to say, these are not the views of the Democratic party's most committed and aggressive activists: the convention delegates themselves, who are every bit as "unrepresentative of America" as any Christian-Coalition Republican in San Diego. Almost 15 percent of Chicago delegates are teachers-union members. A fifth are working politicians: congressmen, senators, governors, state party chairs, and officials of the Democratic National Committee. Another fifth belong to the AFL-CIO. These people are, pardon the expression, *liberals*. They have ideas that are sometimes in conflict with majority American opinion. And the Chicago Democratic convention is therefore determined to ignore them—in the most calculating fashion imaginable.

Will this be a manipulatively "packaged" convention à la San Diego? "I'm not sure there's anything wrong with that," says Gary Smith. "There is no drama in our convention. In purely theatrical terms there is no drama at all. We know pretty much everything there is to know." The trick is to make a series of foregone conclusions "as emotional and provocative"—and risk-free—as possible. And with that in mind, Smith admits, "Everything is scripted."

He said it. As the Republican convention was just getting underway, ABC's Peter Jennings told the *San Diego Union-Tribune* that "whenever a political party goes out of its way to restrain, isolate, or box in other voices—and both parties do it—then you almost invariably attract the attention of journalists." Here's hoping he's right.

American journalism did a gleeful job of revealing the evasions and contradictions of the Republican convention. Worse evasions and contradictions will be available for commentary in Chicago. If those problems are not reported, then conservative suspicion of "liberal media bias" will finally be borne out, beyond dispute.

—David Tell, for the Editors

Dole Sets a Tax-Cut Trap

by Fred Barnes

Lucky Bob Dole. Since President Clinton has just published a campaign book, *Between Hope and History*, Dole's new book on his plan to cut taxes is sure to get prominent display in bookstores, right next to Clinton's. The biggest problems for Dole advisers were deciding whether to publish the book as a paperback or a hardcover and what to name it. Hardcover won, with a first printing from HarperCollins of 250,000 copies. Book titles came and went. *Tax Cut* was considered and rejected. So was *The 15% Tax Cut*. Then *Restoring the American Dream*, a popular slogan in speeches at the Republican convention, was chosen, only to be tossed aside later as unoriginal. The tentative title: *Trusting the People*.

The Dole camp hadn't counted on an assist from Clinton. When Dole aides began work on *Trusting the People* in late July, they didn't know Clinton was coming out with his own book. But the battle of the books fits perfectly with the Dole strategy of trapping Clinton on the big issue of the campaign, cutting taxes. The strategy is simple: Propose a large tax cut for individuals, then hope Clinton not only opposes the cut but engages the issue aggressively. The president and his aides have gone along, bashing Dole daily on taxes. This has kept the tax issue as the centerpiece of the campaign. The Clinton book, by the way, also trashes the Dole tax cut.

There's more to the Dole trap. The premise is that the candidate who's for cutting taxes has a better chance of winning the White House. This has been true in the last four presidential elections. Ronald Reagan won twice as the anti-tax candidate. George Bush, with "read my lips, no new taxes," won in 1988. And Clinton captured the tax issue in 1992 with his talk of a middle-class tax cut and Bush's failure to live up to his pledge. Now there's Dole with his proposal for cutting personal tax rates 15 percent, halving the capital-

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gains rate, trimming the tax bite on Social Security benefits, and providing a $500 tax credit for each child under 18.

Clinton's noisy opposition is essential to the Dole strategy for two reasons. One is that it ensures conflict on the tax issue, which keeps the media interested. The other is that Clinton corners himself in the position of disparaging tax cuts and defending austerity. "Austerity doesn't sell," says David Smick, a Dole adviser. The more Clinton and his allies criticize the Dole tax cut, the harder it will be for Clinton to propose a large tax reduction of his own—or at least propose one credibly.

Clinton has another reason for shying away from a sweeping tax cut. He infuriated liberals by signing a conservative welfare reform bill on August 22, making him all the more averse to angering them on taxes. In any case, there's "absolutely no pressure" on Clinton to match Dole on taxes, says White House press secretary Mike McCurry.

BY ATTACKING DOLE'S PLAN, CLINTON HAS CREATED A NEW FAULT LINE: ONE PARTY IS FOR CUTTING TAXES, THE OTHER ISN'T.

Maybe not, but the White House and the Clinton campaign have done their part to keep the tax issue alive. Clinton's first reaction when Dole unveiled his plan August 5 was to declare himself "unalterably opposed." George Stephanopoulos has used every TV appearance to denounce Dole for backing "tax giveaways" that aren't "paid for." Harold Ickes, the deputy White House chief of staff, has attacked Dole's tax cut in background sessions with reporters. At his birthday party in New York on August 18, Clinton offered a fresh analogy for a large tax cut. He recalled a bakery around the corner from his house in Little Rock. "There were cookies, bagels, donuts, fruit tarts," he said. "Every one of them was good, but if you bought them all and ate them all at once you'd get sick. That's my attitude about this tax cut issue. We can have one, but we have to have one we can afford."

The Clinton campaign takes daily jabs at Dole on taxes. The day after the first Dole TV ad was aired, the campaign issued a statement disputing virtually everything in the commercial. "Today, taxes are the highest in American history," the ad said. Oh no, the Clinton campaign responded. "This is misleading. The average federal tax rate for the typical family is lower now than when President Clinton took office." That claim, it turns out, is misleading. The Dole ad says *taxes* are at their peak, which is true—the ad does not single out federal taxes.

The Dole campaign is considering new television spots on taxes, including one with snippets from Dole's and Jack Kemp's speeches from the GOP convention and another with man-on-the-street interviews on taxes and the economy. No doubt, the Clinton camp would respond to those, too.

The result of all this is that Clinton has taken the bait on taxes. By attacking Dole's plan, he has created a new fault line in the campaign: One party is for cutting taxes, the other isn't. It's change versus the status quo. That's the view of Dole strategists, anyway. Clintonites claim they haven't slipped inadvertently into full-blown criticism of Dole's tax cut. It's where they want to be, since they insist the tax issue helps Clinton, not Dole.

In pushing a big tax cut, "I think they're making a huge error," says Stephanopoulos. Dole, famous as a deficit hawk, ruins his credibility by suddenly embracing tax cuts, according to Stephanopoulos. He's a hypocrite. But it's worse for Dole if people believe he really *will* cut taxes. Then, Stephanopoulos says, they'll fear a bloated deficit or deep new cuts in Medicare, Medicaid, and other programs that the Dole tax cut would require.

The Clintonites don't really sound all that confident the tax debate will play out their way. "Instinctively," McCurry says, "the American people love Bob Dole's tax cut, but in their hearts they know they won't get it. It's a chicken in every pot." Stephanopoulos qualifies his insistence that the tax issue aids Clinton: "As long as it's our tax cut versus their tax cut and not their tax cut versus our pain, then the president gains." That's a big "if."

Clinton belabors the same point. "I am for a tax cut," he declared August 18 in a *60 Minutes* interview. "But it's targeted to the middle class. It's targeted to education and to childbearing." So is the tax relief for small business that was tied to the increase in the minimum wage. And in his acceptance speech at the Democratic convention, Clinton is expected to announce tax breaks for inner-city job development.

The trouble is Clinton's tax cuts appear insignificant compared with Dole's. And *Trusting the People*, the Dole book, casts the Clinton approach as entirely inadequate to cope with current economic problems. The book cheerleads for big tax cuts. It defends supply-side economics and the Reagan tax cuts of the 1980s, and argues that only the Dole plan is broad and sweeping enough to spur stronger economic growth and end wage stagnation for middle-class workers. Clintonites are sure to disagree. No doubt they'll tell us why. ♦

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A Great Speech & Its Critics

by Norman Podhoretz

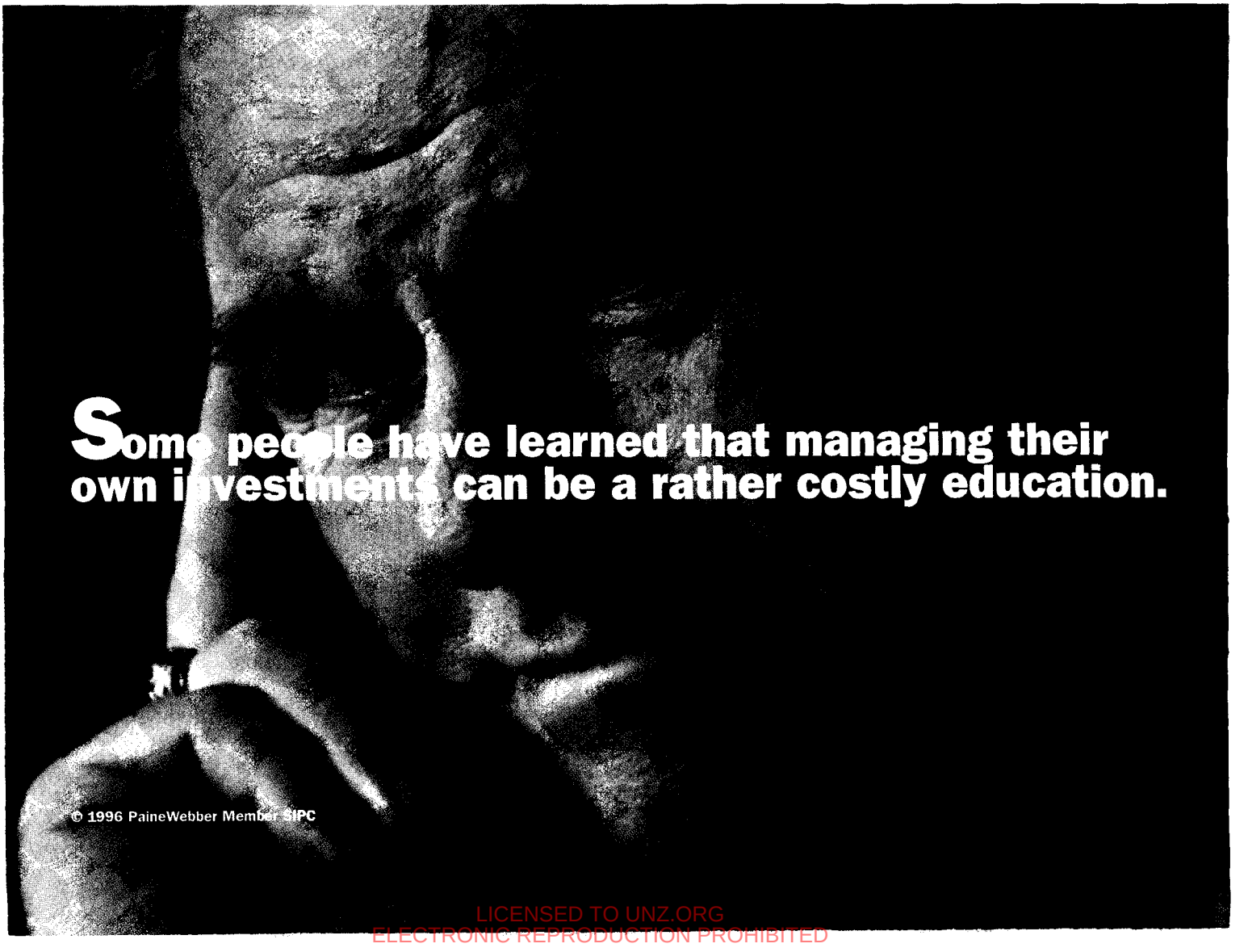
On the night of August 15, 1996, two amazing events occurred. The first was the speech Bob Dole delivered at the Republican National Convention in San Diego accepting his party's nomination for president of the United States.

What was amazing about that speech was that it turned out to be the most distinguished political oration anyone had delivered in America in a very long time. And what made it even more astonishing was that language of such beauty and such eloquence should have issued from the mouth of this taciturn and legendarily inarticulate man.

Of course, as all the world knows, it was the novelist Mark Helprin who put most of that language into Bob Dole's mouth. But that is the way it goes with politicians, and not politicians alone, in our time. Ghosts write their speeches and their articles and their books, and in an epistemological leap we all agree to pretend that the politicians themselves are the true authors. Which in some sense I suppose they are, having (in most cases at least, and certainly in Dole's) dictated the substance and perhaps even the spirit of the text, having also done a bit of editing, and then finally having taken responsibility for the whole by "signing off" on it.

Here, then, are some of the phrases and sentences Bob Dole was willing to accept as his own on August 15. In introducing himself to the American people, by whose "generous leave," as he so wonderfully put it, "I stand here tonight," he proceeded to ring many changes on the image of a man standing:

> And who am I that stands before you tonight? I was born in Russell, Kansas—a small town in the middle of the prairie. . . . It is a place where no one grows up



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> without an intimate knowledge of distance. And the first thing you learn on the prairie is the relative size of a man compared to the lay of the land. And under the immense sky where I was born and raised, a man is very small. And if he thinks otherwise, he is wrong. . . . I come from good people . . . and there's no moment when my memory of them and my love for them does not overshadow anything I do. Even this; even here. And there is no height to which I have risen that is high enough to allow me to forget them, to allow me to forget where I came from, and where I stand and how I stand, with my feet on the ground, just a man at the mercy of God.

Not every passage that followed this sublime beginning could hope to match it, but luminous phrases continued leaping out and lighting up the rhetorical landscape. A number of them used the idea of grace (not often sounded in contemporary political discourse) as a leitmotif: "the gracious compensations of age"; "a grace in leadership embodying both caution and daring at the same time"; "a lesson in grace and awe." And even when he turned to the relatively pedestrian job of listing the policies he supported and opposed—a passage that admittedly had its *longueurs*—his own grace of style did not desert him and often came strikingly into play.

Sometimes it did so through a fresh or unexpected phrase, as when in addressing the teachers' unions, he warned: "I plan to enrich your vocabulary with those words you fear, school choice and competition and opportunity scholarships." Sometimes the same grace showed itself in an unusually elegant approach to the issues. For example, instead of treating immigration and affirmative action as distinct questions, Dole brought them together by looking up—at what he charmingly described as "a very steep angle"—to Washington and Lincoln. Guided by their "concern for the sometimes delicate unity of the people," he conditioned his support for (legal) immigration upon a demand for assimilation that was simultaneously firm and understated. This he then linked with his opposition to the racial and ethnic separatism fostered by affirmative action, without forgetting to add the more standard constitutional argument.

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When was language such as Dole used on this occasion last encountered in a political speech in America? Listening to it, I marveled, and then, channel-surfing after it was over, I came upon the second amazing occurrence of that night.

With the sole exception of Ted Koppel of *Nightline*, who flatly characterized it as "a great speech," I could find no other commentator who had the slightest inkling of its extraordinary quality. No one went as far as Chris Matthews would the next morning on ABC ("It was one of the worst speeches I ever heard in my life"). But Mark Shields of PBS came close: "It was too long a speech, it was not a disciplined speech, it was a compendium, it was a laundry list, it had too much in the middle." And to the ears of ABC's Michel McQueen, Dole sounded like a "preachy grandfather."

Even those who reacted more or less favorably were grudging or patronizing. "It was an effective speech, [but] I've heard more eloquent speeches," declared Jeff Greenfield of ABC. "As these things go, it was a fairly well-delivered political speech," opined Bob Schieffer of CBS. "This was a good speech. It wasn't a great speech," pronounced the pundit Kevin Phillips, also on CBS.

Nor was this stingy response confined to liberals. The conservative commentators (not just faux-conservatives like Phillips, but real ones) were also notably lacking in enthusiasm even when dispensing praise. On PBS the *Wall Street Journal*'s Paul Gigot called the speech "successful, by and large." Also on PBS, William Kristol, the editor and publisher of THE WEEKLY STANDARD, fretted that "it was not forward-looking" (though further reflection later produced an editorial in this magazine acknowledging that "Bob Dole spoke many passages of unusual beauty and power"). To Robert Novak of CNN it was "a pretty good speech," while the *New York Times* columnist William Safire, offering on PBS to put in a few good words for Dole's performance, could come up with nothing better than "good, solid, thematic."

To be sure, all these conservative commentators had been rough on Dole throughout the primary season, and a residual trace of their pessimism over his chances of unseating Bill Clinton, combined with their uncertainty as to whether the speech would increase or do further damage to those chances, might have blinded them to what was happening before their very eyes. And on the other side, the notorious liberal bias of the media pundits may have been at work, presenting itself in the usual fashion as objective reporting and disinterested critical judgment.

Yet whatever political animus may or may not have been driving the commentators, those two amazing facts remain. On the night of August 15 in San Diego, Bob Dole, of all people, raised our political discourse to a literary level higher than it has ever reached before in the living memory even of those of us who share with him "the gracious compensations of age." And for thus enhancing and indeed ennobling our public life with words of exceptional loveliness and images of great richness and coherence, Dole was rewarded with a philistine indifference that shames us as a nation and that tells us something more disheartening about the corruption of taste and the erosion of standards in America than all the lowest and most vulgar excrescences of pop culture put together.

Norman Podhoretz, for 35 years the editor of* Commentary, *is a senior fellow of the Hudson Institute.

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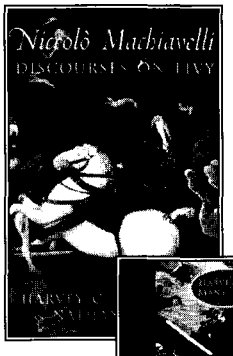

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Reading Bill Clinton

By Andrew Ferguson

President Clinton has published a new book, *Between Hope and History: Meeting America's Challenges for the 21st Century* (Times Books, $16.95). By all accounts, it had a remarkably brief gestation, a few months from conception to birth. You can't blame him for wanting to get it out as quickly as possible. Presidential campaigns are traditionally heralded by books: Every four years the shelves at Crown and Borders fairly groan beneath the candidates' authorized biographies, their memoirs, their comprehensive statements of vision, the thin, paperbacked collections of their bon mots. But what would an earnest voter find today on a search for published Clintoniana? There's James Stewart's *Blood Sport*, an account of Arkansas land-flips and S&L hanky-panky. Or Bob Woodward's *The Choice*, which shows the president's wife channeling Eleanor Roosevelt, who used to be dead. Or Roger Morris's *Partners in Power* and R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.'s *Boy Clinton*, which implicate the president in drug-running and . . . well, worse.

To balance the scales against this mountain of abuse, the president now offers his little wisp of a book, weighing in at slightly less than a box of Raisinettes. It's 178 pages long, though if you adjust for typesetting inflation it is probably closer to 75, and if you further adjust for the inflationary effects of throat-clearing, repetition, and wheel-spinning, you can peg the final count somewhere below 50. On the dust jacket President Bill Clinton is listed as sole author, and the White House has circulated a photocopied page of manuscript, dark with presidential scratchings, to prove that the president labored over every word. In the acknowledgments he gives generous thanks to an improbably named "public policy consultant," William E. Nothdurft, "who was primarily responsible for helping to draft this book," and who, if I know the Clintons, will never be heard from ever again.

Between Hope and History is a politician's book—part philosophizing, part policy-wonking. All politicians' books are ghostwritten nowadays, and so readers must strain to hear beneath the paid-for and polished prose the whisper of the putative author's true voice. But what is the president's true voice? The only piece of prose I know to be Bill Clinton's and Bill Clinton's alone is the famous 1969 letter to Col. Holmes, in which the future president thanked the old soldier for "saving me from the draft." It shows him to be a stylist of some gifts, a man who prevaricates with great elegance and even charm. But the voice we have grown used to over the last three years is the voice of his speechwriters. In his speeches, the president's original impulse toward straightforward prevarication is obscured by the mundane fudging and hedging of a committee of bureaucrats and political consultants and pollsters.

And this, alas, is the voice we hear in the pages of *Between Hope and History*. Some of the fudging can be credited to the president himself, of course. Note, above, the acknowledgment of William E. Nothdurft. Given the contretemps over the unacknowledged ghostwriter of Mrs. Clinton's book last year, the president was compelled to give Nothdurft's existence a nod. And you can easily imagine the sentence as it was presented to the president for editing: . . . *William E. Nothdurft, who drafted this book.* A simple declarative phrase, not imputing authorship but acknowledging essential assistance—and a phrase, moreover, that's true. But perhaps it offended the vanity of a statesman who would prefer sole credit. So a presidential emendation: *who primarily drafted this book.* Better. But still too strong? After all, whose name is on the cover? Then this: *who was primarily responsible for drafting this book.* Hmmm—a furrow of the brow, a bite of the lower lip. The fellow is getting paid, isn't he? What more compensation should he want? A few more scratches of the pen, and: *Nothdurft, who was primarily responsible for helping to draft this book.* And there the president let it lie. From a statement of fact to a phrase approaching the nonsensical: It is the Clinton style distilled to its essence.

But the book offers few fudges so small and straightforward as this. More often, the prevarications are multileveled, Escher-like, almost hallucinatory. It is the work of a committee of trimmers, each of them adding and subtracting, layering and revising in emu-

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lation of their boss and master. The result, as a matter of prose, will be familiar to students of Clinton's speeches. Lincoln brought to presidential utterance a lawyerly terseness with a twist of biblical eloquence. FDR brought the soaring platitude, Kennedy the annoying reverse parallelism. Bill Clinton will be noted for the overstuffed sentence—the sentence as train wreck.

The Clinton sentence signifies a man trying to say so many things at once that he ends up saying nothing at all. Often this involves an endless series of participial phrases, allowing each member of the committee to get in his licks: "strengthening our nation's families, protecting our environment, caring for the elderly, keeping our streets safe . . . " Often it is simple and direct, as in this, which is, please note, a single sentence. Take a breath:

"The actions we take today will determine what kinds of jobs Americans will have tomorrow, how competitive our businesses will be in the global economy, how well-prepared our children—especially the poorest among them—will be to succeed, how secure and healthy our parents and grandparents will be, how safe our streets will be, how well we protect our land . . . "

And so on through several more clauses, as the president's face slowly turns blue. The book is choked with such sentences. Everyone gets to put something in, no one takes anything out, and the original point, if such there was, is lost forever. Of course, we must assume that the amiable Nothdurft is a professional writer, and so the book varies from time to time in tone. The president talks tough, as hairy-chested New Democrats often do: "Public housing is a privilege; abuse it and you're out." (Got that, you son-of-a-bitch?) And there are flights of pure wonkery. He ventilates countless initiatives, all impressively capitalized: the Crime Bill, One-Stop Career Centers, the Anti-Terrorism Bill, the National Gang Tracking Network, the National Drug Control Strategy, Second Chance Homes, America's Hope Scholarships, the College Opportunity Strategy, the National Export Strategy, Empowerment Zones, Enterprise Communities. . . . If you ache to know the difference between the president's proposed tax deduction for college costs and his proposed tax credit for up to two years of community college, you'll find it here.

There are other favored rhetorical tropes. He makes excellent use of that time-honored dodge of all after-dinner speakers, the false choice. The debate about the role of government in our national life is presented as a contest between anarchists on the one hand, and on the other . . . oh, Stalin. The president comes down firmly somewhere in the middle. The trade debate is similarly stark. "You have those who say we should build walls around our country" in pitched battle against "those who say what we need is pure free trade." The president's solution? "We need fair trade with fair rules."

Such Solomonic judgments come at considerable personal cost to our president. In his book Bill Clinton never says he "fights" about something without jamming the word "hard" right up next to it. The upshot is that Bill Clinton "fights hard." And if you wonder who he's fighting for, read the book. (It's *you*, silly!) This allows him to pull off the neatest of Clintonian tricks: self-pity as an exercise in self-aggrandizement. We are meant to feel sorry for him and be awed by him at the same time. Here is his account of last year's budget battle:

"The Republicans believed I would give in to them just to keep government going on a lot less money. But I wasn't fighting for 'government.' I was fighting for the future of America and for a different, less bureaucratic modern approach to help people help themselves. . . . I didn't cave. . . ."

As that passage indicates, a few elbows are thrown at Republicans in *Between Hope and History*, mainly through misrepresentation; he refers, as expected, to their "massive cuts in Medicare," which of course were neither massive nor cuts. (The Republicans proposed to slow Medicare's rate of growth by $158 billion over seven years; the president proposed $124 billion.) But the dominant tone is of a man who wants to please all the people all the time while getting credit for his unshakable convictions.

"We must meet," he writes, "the challenges of a new century and, at the same time, protect the values that have kept us on course for more than two hundred years." Yes, some may disagree . . . This is why those overstuffed sentences come in so handy. And what words those sentences are stuffed with! Scarcely a page goes by without referring to "challenges" (which must be met) or "dreams" (which must be dreamed, or realized, or come true). The "d" in "American Dream" is always capitalized, which puts it, in importance, up there with the National Gang Tracking Network. Some sentences simply go limp under the weight of all those big words:

"When opportunity and responsibility are in balance, when each is given equal value—in our families, our businesses, our neighborhoods, and the nation as a whole—we achieve the objective we all seek, a community of purpose and a clearer vision of the American Dream—a dream we all hope to share as part of our American community."

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Now, I challenge the most accomplished grammarians in this, the greatest country on the face of the earth, to parse that sentence. As I read it—and I've read it to the point of migraine—it suggests that within our own communities we as a people must give equal value to opportunity and responsibility in order to achieve a community filled with businesses and families that will help us share a community, which in turn will enable us to dream of a vision of another dream—a dream, moreover, that is capitalized—and *this is the objective we all seek as part of our community*. Or am I wrong?

The president's attitude toward language recalls Thomas Beecham's comment on the English attitude toward music: "They don't much like music, but they rather like the noise it makes." This preference is essential to his art. He uses language not to illuminate but to obscure. Every ten pages or so, the president issues a ringing disclaimer about the limitations of government.

"The truth is that government's role in strengthening families, while important, is limited."

"It's clear that the federal government alone cannot begin to provide solutions."

Meanwhile, the nine pages preceding and following such passages are devoted to a laundry list of federal programs he has produced to address some national emergency. On one page, there's a National Tread Conservation Strategy to help you rotate your tires; on the next, a Federal Lights Out Initiative to make sure you tuck your kids in at night. I exaggerate, but only slightly. The dissonance is deafening.

Is this the committee again at work, or is it the true voice of the man who smoked dope but didn't inhale? I think it's the latter. When you set the book aside, you can't help but be struck by its paradoxical effect. For all the clouds of obfuscation that billow from its pages, for all the double talk and dissembling and fudging, the portrait of Bill Clinton that emerges at last is as exquisitely etched as the finest crystal, and just as transparent. The wonkiness, the contradictions, the wordiness; the double-talk, the dissembling, the fudging: Here is the man as he is. Whoever would know our president would do well to read this book. It belongs in your library, with *Boy Clinton* on one side and *Blood Sport* on the other. ♦

McCurrying Favor

By Carl M. Cannon

Near the end of the 1992 campaign, Paul Begala, a Clinton adviser, said that Marlin Fitzwater was the most political White House press secretary in American history. Four years later, Republicans have decided that line has a nice ring to it.

"Mike McCurry is the most partisan press secretary in history," says Republican National Committee communications director Ed Gillespie. President Clinton's spokesman has brought droll humor, competence, and an atmosphere of civility to the White House briefing room. He has also brought his partisan reflexes, honed during years of laboring for Democrats in Congress, Democratic candidates, and the Democratic National Committee.

Those instincts, coupled with the Permanent Campaign mindset of the Clinton White House, have produced a daily briefing that is often indistinguishable from a Clinton-Gore press release, a DNC talking point, or for that matter an AFL-CIO attack ad. "A Washington press secretary is the nexus between policy and politics—always," Gillespie says. "And McCurry is the most partisan press secretary in history because he's working in the most political White House in history. I mean, everything with these people is political. Their EPA holds Earth Day events in districts with vulnerable freshmen—perfectly tracking where the AFL-CIO buys ads."

If that sounds simultaneously like a tough political counterattack as well as a backhanded defense of McCurry, that's because Gillespie is a longtime political flack himself—and McCurry's Republican counterparts secretly like him.

"He uses irony, sarcasm, and wit in the political zone, but he has a deft touch when discussing tragedy or the delicate areas of foreign policy," says Tony Blankley, Newt Gingrich's mouthpiece. "The presi-

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dent doesn't really deserve the representation he gets from Mike McCurry."

Most reporters like the guy, too. He has fulfilled his promise, made his first day on the job, to bring some much-needed levity to a largely humorless White House press operation. He also returns phone calls, works hard, and doesn't wing it, which means what he tells the media is generally Clinton administration policy.

And yet, there's just this one flaw in Superman's cape. "It's better to talk to him away from the daily briefing," says ABC's Brit Hume. "It's clear that the White House has decided the briefings should be an aggressive exercise in salesmanship and argument—and McCurry is conducting them accordingly. There are days when you think he'll tell you it's really night outside."

Helen Thomas, the venerable UPI correspondent McCurry sometimes makes play the straight man in his daily banter, speaks highly of him. But she has no illusions about whom he's really working for. "He's very partisan, but he understands our role," she says. "I asked him once if he'd ever lie to us and he said, 'No, but I'd tell the truth slowly.'"

Telling the truth slowly is a nice little euphemism for how the Clinton administration has talked about Medicare and the federal budget during the past year. And McCurry has done his part.

Kent Lemon

Mike McCurry

"The reason they're trying to slow the rate of increase [in Medicare], I suppose, is because eventually they'd like to see the program just die and go away," McCurry said on October 26, 1995. "You know, that's probably what they'd like to see happen to seniors, too, if you think about it."

That was beyond the pale—and McCurry later apologized to Gingrich—but he didn't suddenly become as evenhanded as C-SPAN's Brian Lamb.

"That was a sad thing to watch," McCurry told reporters two weeks ago after Dole unveiled his 15 percent tax-cut plan. "Bob Dole has devoted an exemplary career in the United States Senate to important principles like balancing the budget and living within our means. And it was rather sad to watch him humiliate himself by walking away from those firmly held beliefs."

Asked the next day about the Republican platform in San Diego, McCurry responded: "Mr. Dole has now embraced, indeed endorsed, an unrelenting, intolerant assault on a woman's right to choose." Later, in the same briefing, when McCurry was asked about language accommodating to pro-lifers at the Democrats' Chicago convention, he decided that those opposed to abortion were worthy of respect—provided they were Democrats. "We respect the individual conscience of each American on this difficult issue," he replied.

Well, then, which was it? he was asked. Are pro-lifers intolerant bigots? Or are they people following the dictates of their consciences? "We have a tolerance plank in our platform," McCurry said stubbornly. "The Republican platform plank on this issue is intolerant. And so is Mr. Dole."

Asked months ago about the president's position on Dole's proposal earlier this year to rescind the 4.3 cent-per-gallon Clinton gas-tax increase, McCurry again was pugnacious: "When are they going to address the question of how you pay for this? Are they going to cut Social Security? Are they gonna cut Medicare? Are they gonna cut education? Are they gonna cut environmental protection? I'll answer your question about the president's intentions when Senator Dole does."

There was a time in American politics—it seems quaint now—when the presidential press secretary was the spokesman for the American government, not just one party that elected a president with 43 percent of the vote. In his tenure at the State Department, where he was spokesman for two years before moving to the White House, McCurry practiced this doctrine—and he does so now at the White House when the issue is national security or terrorism or foreign policy or something that eclipses party politics. "When he talks about those things he gets a different look on his face, he speaks in a different voice," says White House communications director Donald Baer.

McCurry himself does not rely on any distinction between foreign and domestic policy when asked about Republican complaints that he's been too partisan. To his credit, he concedes the criticism is sometimes valid. He suggests a couple of reasons why he behaves as he does. One is that until recently, the Clinton-Gore campaign had no spokesman of its own, and McCurry was constantly being asked questions better

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directed to a campaign press secretary. He also concedes that sometimes he just, well, blows it. "When you're out there answering questions five days a week, you're bound to commit a miscue from time to time."

But McCurry's primary answer is that those accusing him of excessive partisanship are ignoring the central context in which it exists, namely the invective directed at President Clinton. McCurry is obliged to counter.

"There are times when they are absolutely right that I sound too partisan," he says. "It's also correct that this president is subject to the most vitriolic, partisan attacks that any recent American has faced. . . . You have to step it up sometimes to just to defend against it."

Martha Joynt Kumar, a Towson State University professor and the acknowledged expert on White House press secretaries, says she believes there is something to McCurry's explanation. "He's more partisan—I was struck by that," she says flatly of McCurry, whom she likes a great deal. "It seemed so different from what he's like as a person. So I began reading about that and talking to people. And I think it's true that the partisanship of the national government is just much more intense than it used to be; it has leached into every level, including the White House briefing room."

Marlin Fitzwater, the subject of Begala's jibe, also believes that it's next to impossible for a White House press secretary to stay above the fray in an election year.

"Despite what Begala said, in terms of my background [as a bureaucrat], I was probably the *least* partisan press secretary in history. But if you get on that campaign plane, I just don't know how you avoid sounding that way," says Fitzwater. "In hindsight, I probably should have stayed in the White House and sent someone else out with Bush."

There is one final factor at work with Clinton that affects McCurry's performance, however. Clinton has been known to berate his aides for the supposed transgression of not defending him strongly enough. And remember that McCurry wasn't even a Clinton guy when he came to the White House. So he took his cue from someone who was: George Stephanopoulos.

Before FBI agent Gary Aldrich's book ever hit the bookstores, Stephanopoulos had asserted that Craig Livingstone had been hired by deceased deputy White House counsel Vincent W. Foster, Jr., that Aldrich publicist Craig Shirley was an adviser to Bob Dole, that Aldrich was "a pathological liar," and that the book was a "Republican smear campaign."

McCurry followed suit: "It's fiction," he said of the book. "That's our position." Craig Shirley was "a paid adviser" to the Dole campaign, McCurry claimed. That happened to be not quite true, but really, what's the difference in an election year?

Asked last week if he thought there was anything to the Republican criticism of the president on the drug war or if it was all political, McCurry shrugged and said, "It's politics. You know, everything is politics now." ♦

We'll Have a Gay Old Time

By Matt Labash

Chicago

Billed by its sponsor as the first-ever "gay political convention," OutVote '96 promised to be a Tommy Tune musical opening smack in the middle of a pallid season—the week before the Democratic convention and in the same town. One goes to such an event eagerly anticipating jaunty bursts of color from the nipple-cuffed, softball-cleated fire-snorters who usually comprise the crowd.

Not this time. The only costume on display was borne by some hulking Adam's apple stuffed into a floral-print dress, wobbling around on stacked heels—and he didn't make much noise. Most of them don't. The Human Rights Campaign, which sponsored OutVote, is an organization of ice-water pragmatists who'd rather talk precinct programs, fund-raising, and voter mobilization for gay-friendly candidates than make placards and scream at people. The largest gay organization in the country (it claims 175,000 members), HRC is a haven for a more subdued Italian-silk and tasseled-loafer set, where well-to-do's can discuss election strategy and be dazzled by each other's White House access.

It is where, as more traditional hardliners like

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ACT-UP's Steve Michael suggest, chi chi activists become Vichy activists.

"This isn't a gay convention," Michael says, "just the HRC sugarcoating Clinton's record and taking us down this silly little path of assimilation."

The HRC would take issue that it's completely in the tank for Clinton. Sure, it endorsed him all the way back in February, before primary season was over and before he felt compelled to assure the straight world he'd sign the anti-gay-matrimony Defense of Marriage Act (Dole received an HRC spanking for sponsoring the same measure). And yes, in 1992, its membership pumped Clinton about $2.5 million (though it had never endorsed a presidential candidate in its 12-year history)—and it'll kick in around another million this year.

But everyone from HRC executive director Elizabeth Birch to HRC celebrity spokesmodel Candace Gingrich insisted this was a non-partisan convention thrown by a non-partisan organization. And a good thing too. Because with all the Clinton/Gore '96 pink triangle signs, the workshops headed by DNC and Reelect Clinton/Gore staffers, the Emily's List panelists, the speeches by Henry Cisneros and George Stephanopoulos, and the video greeting from Clinton himself, one started noticing a slight partisan accent.

But wait! There was gay Republican Steve Gunderson sharing a microphone and a kiss at the lunch dais—with his non-Republican "co-author, partner and conscience," Rob Morris. The two men, promoting their new tome *House and Home*, did a little he said/he said schtick that made even George Hamilton-Alana Stewart banter look dignified. Rob got all the sassy lines about those tacky, bejeweled Republican heifers he saw in San Diego, while Steve wrinkled his nose as straight man, shooting a couldn't-you-just-put-him-in-a-pepper-grinder-and-sprinkle-him-over-salad look at his beloved.

Birch herself fostered a spirit of bipartisan equanimity when invoking Bob Dornan, Phyllis Schlafly, and the two Pats, Robertson and Buchanan: "We are trying very hard to hate the sin but love the sinner—in their case, it is very tough." Others, like the very gay Rev. Troy Perry, were less circumspect: "Pat Buchanan, you're going to die and go to Hell!"

Okay, so it's not exactly screaming headlines for a gay organization to go whole-hog Democrat. Except consensus in the activist community isn't as cut-and-dried as one might think. One out of three gay voters supposedly went Republican in the '94 elections, which was the impetus for a doubling of the response to the HRC's direct mail. Though the overtly partisan Log Cabin Republicans have a much smaller membership (10,000), executive director Rich Tafel says a recent survey of his members shows nearly half have been or are members of the HRC.

"More important than votes," says Tafel, "gays are an ATM machine for politicians, especially with all that West Hollywood and New York money." And with its $8 million budget, 60 staffers, its ranking in the top 50 PACs, and proactive ground organization in over 150 races this fall, the HRC is a force that warrants heavy courtship.

But it doesn't take much wooing, since Steve Michael and others allege they're already on their backs for Clinton. While HRC staffers spent their time in San Diego financing anti-Republican ads about the "anti-gay-marriage bill" (a bill Clinton couldn't endorse fast enough on both constitutional and moral grounds), the HRC is co-hosting six parties with Clinton's reelection campaign during the Democratic National Convention. This election cycle, it has given over five times as much money to Democrats as Republicans, and on its 144-race endorsement sheet, Republicans garner a mere 14 nods.

"They raise money from Republicans to give primarily to Democrats," says Tafel. Which begs the question, Is HRC a non-partisan gay-rights advocacy group or a Democratic auxiliary?

The HRC says "the choice is clear," but a second Clinton term has decidedly non-Republican activists like Michael coughing hairballs in the manner of a practiced denizen of one of the cattiest backlots in politics:

"They're the most worthless, pathetic organization in the gay community. The only issue Clinton cares about is getting reelected. He's been horrible for gays, but the cocktail-party revolutionaries at the Human Rights Champagne Fund melt because George Stephanopoulos shows up to work his look at their convention. Well I've done guys with big hair, and I'm not impressed." Meow.

The HRC dismisses Michael as a flame-throwing media hound, but his assessment of Clinton's aptitude for political expediency on gay issues is corroborated by none other than David Mixner, who worked as a '92 campaign strategist swinging much of the gay vote for Clinton but was later arrested outside the White House for protesting Clinton's gays-in-the-military cave-in. In his new book *Stranger Among Friends*, Mixner writes of the administration in a chapter entitled "Betrayals": "If there were gains to be made by supporting us, they would speak out. If there was the possibility of any political fallout, they were the first to advocate pulling back."

Agree with them or not, activists by their very

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nature are paid to remain unsatisfied, and many regard Clinton as the most gay-friendly president in history. But besides those literalist nags who expected a middle-class tax cut, few constituencies were promised as much and delivered as little as the gay community by the president.

This didn't deter the HRC from dispatching Clinton/Gore propaganda on the president's stellar gay-rights record—from endorsing the Employment Non-Discrimination Act to eliminating barriers for gays to getting security clearances in the executive branch to setting up a presidential liaison to the gay community.

But not touted quite as loudly were his reversals and equivocations. Here's an incomplete list of pledges Clinton has welshed on: Gays in the military. A Manhattan-project-style war on AIDS. Needle-exchange programs. A powerful cabinet-level AIDS czar. An executive order banning discrimination in *all* federal agencies. The 30 recommendations of Bush's National Commission on AIDS. Abolition of the U.S. travel ban for foreigners with the HIV virus. A veto of the 1996 defense authorization bill with Dornan's amendment requiring expulsion of all HIV-positive military members (Clinton vetoed it once, then signed it before a bipartisan effort repealed the amendment).

But niggling inconsistencies could not dampen the HRC apologia. Actual quote from Judith Light, star of the sitcom *Who's the Boss?*: "It is my personal prediction that Mr. Clinton is actually a very good, deeply well-intentioned human being who wanted to be our Savior as much as we wanted him to be, but he was hit by a blast of reality in the forces of resistance and small-mindedness that took him overwhelmingly by surprise. . . . If it had proved to be a gentler world, he would've acted upon his assurances." Actual quote from Elizabeth Birch: "President Clinton told us that his vision of America includes us, and if that vision is not quite as clear as we might always wish, it is nonetheless extraordinary."

Actual quote from Steve Michael: "It's a big therapy session. They're sitting around telling each other they're special and matter in Clinton's vision. Given a choice between Clinton and Dole, I'd go with Dole. If Nixon can do China, why can't Dole do AIDS?"

Such cynicism was rare at the HRC-fest, and if any bubbled up, it was squelched by peppy little numbers like Paul Yandura of Gay & Lesbian Clinton/Gore Re-Elect, who encouraged us to sell at least ten friends on Clinton's spotless record.

"Trust me," he assured the crowd, "I can't go anywhere without telling someone how great Clinton is. People have a good feeling about him, but they sometimes need to be talked through it." And if, in talking it through, one encounters hold-outs who bring up bothersome corruption scandals, simply adopt the rationale of Brian Bond of the DNC: "This is a president who knew he wanted to be president when he was 12 years old. He's not likely to have done anything that would ruin that opportunity."

They called the conventioneers "delegates," but no roll call was necessary. Support for the president was unmistakable from the hissing inspired by George Stephanopoulos's asking us to shut our eyes and imagine all the jowly Republican Satans who would go unchecked if the Democrats lost the election. Though he'd been disinvited from an HRC event earlier this summer (as a result of Clinton's stance on the anti-gay-marriage bill), Stephanopoulos was out of the doghouse and back in the clover. While wiry men with Caligula bangs hopped on their chairs and stabbed the air with their pelvises, vamping it up for C-SPAN, Stephanopoulos took his rightful place beneath the bunting and balloon drop. He stood there beaming during the playing of "Stars and Stripes Forever," his latissimus dorsi hyperextended from having his hands raised by two taller lesbians with much longer wingspans. It was marvelous campaign stagecraft. And the unfulfilled promises and boisterous claims didn't seem nearly as pressing—like the administration's highly touted "over 100 openly gay and lesbian political appointees."

"Ask them for a list," implored Steve Michael. "Nobody's been able to get one—and they were saying it was about 30 just a few months ago."

So I did, calling Richard Socarides, the White House Liaison to the Gay & Lesbian Community, who assured me the number of appointees was over 100 but said the administration doesn't compile lists and wouldn't supply one even if it did—in order to protect employees.

"But I thought they were openly gay," I respond, "and how do you know you have 100 if you haven't got a list?"

"Well, it may not be 100 when you consider people who have left," says Socarides, "but we know because of receptions we give for the gay and lesbian appointees."

"If you give receptions," I ask, "then maybe I could get the invite list from whoever puts those together?"

"This occasionally comes up in the context of events," he replies, "but no one usually questions it further. They wouldn't make a list of that available. It doesn't exist."

He stops short. "Well, I suppose it existed at one point in time," he says, laughing nervously, "but you're just going to have to take my word for it." ♦

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Questions for Crime-Buster Clinton

By John J. DiIulio, Jr.

President Clinton is campaigning hard on his record as a tough-on-crime, pro-death-penalty Democrat, and I, for one, have supported a number of the administration's anti-crime policies, from the ban on assault weapons to the expansion of drug-treatment programs.

But on a distressing number of counts, the Clinton record on crime policy is far, far less credible than meets the eye. Either the president is softer on crime than he pretends, or he's allowed his crime policy to be carjacked by the Reno-led Justice Department.

Let's start with the latest example. On April 26, 1996, President Clinton signed the Prison Litigation Reform Act (PLRA) into law. The PLRA evolved from a provision of the 1994 crime bill intended to keep federal judges from running state prisons and imposing arbitrary caps on jail populations. Prisons in some 39 states, and about 300 of the nation's largest jails, were operating under federal court direction. The National District Attorneys Association and other law-enforcement organizations argued persuasively that many federal court decrees were not required by the Constitution or by any federal law. Moreover, they documented how some of these orders had seriously jeopardized public safety, exploded the costs of operating jails, and made federal judges sovereign over the smallest details of prison administration.

For example, when Ed Rendell, a former D.A., became Philadelphia's mayor, his first official act was to file a petition asking a federal district court judge to vacate her decade-long control over the city's jail system. Without any finding of a constitutional violation, Judge Norma Shapiro had imposed a population cap on the city's jails and used her small army of court aides to micro-manage the system. In one 18-month period alone, the cap resulted in 9,723 re-arrests of individuals who had been freed because of the decree. While free, they committed 79 murders, 90 rapes, 701 burglaries, 959 robberies, 1,113 assaults, 2,715 drug-dealing crimes, and 2,748 thefts. One of those murdered in cold blood was rookie Philadelphia policeman Daniel Boyle. His father, Pat, a veteran cop himself, testified before Congress and asked whether anyone could tell him and his family why Danny had to die. Nobody could.

But the provision of the 1994 crime bill that was supposed to end this judicially mandated mayhem proved too weak. Aided and abetted by the prisoners' rights lobby, Shapiro and several other federal judges simply maintained their control via "consent decrees" that had never enjoyed the consent of the governed.

The Prison Litigation Reform Act was expressly designed to tighten the restrictions on federal judges without keeping them from intervening as necessary to protect the legitimate constitutional rights of prisoners. Its language was unambiguous. It enjoyed strong bipartisan support. On July 27, 1995, I testified at a Senate hearing at which a Justice Department official, representing the president's stated views, endorsed the PLRA in all of its essentials.

But now the Reno Justice Department is filing brief after brief in cases from New York to Iowa to Michigan, arguing that the PLRA not only permits but *requires* federal courts to maintain their grip on prisons and jails. In a move that only literary deconstructionists could love, the Justice Department is acting as if the PLRA has no fixed meaning—or legislative history, for that matter. Among other baldfaced maneuvers, Reno's department is insisting that any failure of any kind to meet any judge's existing federal prison or jail order constitutes a "violation of a federal right." That effectively invalidates the PLRA.

For example, would you believe the one about the 1993 federal court order requiring that certain parts of a New York jail be cleaned with Boraxo in a solution of four ounces per gallon of water? Believe it. Under the Justice Department's insidious spin on the PLRA, a jail official who used another detergent would be violating a "federal right." Bingo! That's sufficient legal pretext for activist federal judges to ignore the PLRA, and thereby defy the clear will of the Congress as warmly endorsed by the nation's crime-buster in chief.

Never mind that the duty of top Justice officials is

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to assist the president in faithfully executing the laws of the land. Why faithfully execute clear-cut laws you hope quietly to undermine?

Of course, one shouldn't be too surprised. Just recall what really happened with several major provisions of the 1994 crime bill. For example, the fine print of the bill's prison-construction provisions was hedged with all kinds of language about community-based alternatives to incarceration (read: Put more felons on probation and parole and still get your federal "prison" dollars).

Likewise, I'm all for saturation community-based policing, and I support a real federal role in assisting financially strapped big cities in thickening their thin blue lines. But the "100,000 cops" provision of the 1994 crime bill remains notable mainly as one of the cleverest policy ploys in recent political history. For instance, while administration officials have stated publicly that over 40,000 cops have been hired under the bill, the actual number as of July 1996 was probably closer to 19,000, of whom only about 12,000 were new hires (the rest were already on the force but "redeployed"). When asked about this reckoning at a recent press briefing, Reno simply punted.

Still, nothing compares to the straight-faced performance Clinton officials gave on August 8 when the administration held a press conference to announce national reductions in certain categories of crime. They released FBI and other Justice Department data to produce tables showing that juvenile violent crime arrest rates had fallen by 2.9 percent in 1995 (the first drop in seven years), while juvenile murder arrest rates had fallen by 22.8 percent since 1993.

With few exceptions, the media uncritically reported the good news, as well as Reno's perfunctory statements about crime rates being still too high.

Here are just a few questions the boys on the Clinton press bandwagon should have pursued on August 8—you know, the way they would have if the attorney general's name were Meese or Barr and the president's were Reagan or Bush—but didn't:

"Are the president's policies also to blame for the over 4.4 percent annual increase in juvenile violent-crime arrest rates from 1992 to 1994, and the 16 percent increase in the juvenile murder rate in 1992-93?"

"How do you explain the 52 percent increase from 1992-94 in past-month illicit drug use among high school seniors? Don't other of your own recently released reports and public statements by Justice officials indicate that Americans suffered over 10 million violent crimes last year and warn that juvenile crime is very likely to get worse in the years ahead?"

"One of your tables is headed 'Four Measures of Serious Violent Crime' and counts homicides, rapes, robberies, and aggravated assaults. It shows that the actual (as opposed to reported) number of such crimes crossed 4 million in 1992 and remained there for the first time in a decade, right? How much 'serious' violent crime do you think is acceptable in America, and in what, if any, sense are the other 6 million violent crimes suffered by Americans last year not 'serious'?"

"Given that millions of Americans have moved to gated communities, invested billions in private security, and engaged in all manner of personally inconvenient but necessary behavior to avoid crime, shouldn't we be seeing even bigger drops in crime by now?"

"Does increased use of imprisonment have anything to do with recent drops in crime, or do you still believe, as you and many of the administration's crime advisers argued publicly early in the administration, that prisons hold far too many petty criminals and 'non-violent' drug offenders? To your knowledge, does the president now share that view, or has he ever shared it?"

"These crime data are not normally released at this time of year or in such a handy, user-friendly form. Did the White House, which launched its reelection drive early on with crime ads, have anything whatsoever to do with the production, timing, or public release of this 'good news' only a few weeks before the presidential nominating conventions? If so, is that a justifiable use of the Justice Department?" (Devilish translation: Dick Morris has a well-known soft spot for rape defendants, but data-starved criminologists, too?)

And, to dream on, here's a small batch of Clinton-on-crime questions that the national press should start asking today:

• Does the president support or oppose the PLRA?

• Is the president, who only this summer heralded the need for a victims' rights amendment to the Constitution, actually as solicitous of *prisoners'* rights as the behavior of his own Justice Department would have one conclude?

• How can the president scoff at Republican charges that he has appointed soft-on-crime judges while presiding over efforts by his own administration to re-empower these very judges?

I find it hard to believe that President Clinton, a policy wonk for the ages, doesn't know the basic crime policy details almost as well as he knows the overnight polling results. If this is what one gets out of the first Clinton administration during a reelection drive, what is to be expected out of a second Clinton-Reno Justice Department?

ACLU, take heart. ♦

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Ed Rollins and the End of Honor

By Robert W. Merry

In his multivolume *Story of Civilization*, Will Durant tells the tale of a young English nobleman who was a favorite at the court of Elizabeth I. Once when he was presenting himself to the queen, he bowed with elaborate obeisance—and inadvertently broke wind. So utterly consumed with embarrassment was the poor fellow that he promptly booked passage to the New World, where he languished in self-imposed exile for three years before concluding that he had expiated his embarrassment sufficiently to return to England and show his face once again at court.

Those were far different times, times when there was such a thing as embarrassment. There were also such things as shame and honor. In our times, in our court of national politics, those things seem to be in serious decline, if indeed they exist anymore at all.

Nothing illustrates this reality more starkly than this wretched little book by the well-known Republican operative Edward J. Rollins. The man seems to have utterly no capacity for embarrassment. *Bare Knuckles and Back Rooms: My Life in American Politics* (Broadway Books, 386 pages, $27.50) makes clear that Rollins has a tendency to stumble into episodes any normal person would be ashamed of—and yet he manifests no shame at all.

And his book, written with Tom DeFrank, gives a whole new meaning to the word disloyalty. Rollins trashes just about everybody he ever worked with in American politics throughout the 30 years of his largely mediocre career. Nor does he spare people from whom he took substantial sums of money; no sense of loyalty compels him toward compassion simply because some sucker extended opportunities along Rollins's path to fame and wealth. He casually tosses nearly all such people into a category he calls "dumbf— candidates," people he portrays as so stupid they could hardly walk through a door without banging their heads and who certainly wouldn't have amounted to anything if it hadn't been for the strategic brilliance and street smarts of one Edward J. Rollins.

Consider the remarkable tale of Rollins's association with New Jersey governor Christine Todd Whitman, who won her job in a hotly contested race in 1993. When Whitman hired Rollins for that campaign, it amounted to a rescue mission for the often-beleaguered politico. He had practically ruined his career as a Republican operative some months earlier by rushing down to Dallas to help run the alternative-party presidential candidacy of billionaire Ross Perot.

He had gone to Dallas against the objection and sound judgment of his wife, Sherrie, whose job as a high-profile aide in the George Bush White House came to an end when her husband ignored her and joined forces with the opposition. Predictably, his political adventure in Texas lasted little more than a few weeks, and it was widely assumed that Rollins's career as a Republican paladin was over. If he couldn't remain loyal to his party, how could he expect Republicans to hire him?

Whitman gave the guy another chance. If he could contribute to a victory for this bright but longshot candidate, he would be back in the game. It was a marvelous opportunity; he owed a lot to Christie Whitman. On Election Day, she pulled off a dramatic victory. It was a heady moment, to be savored by candidate and consultant alike.

And then, just a few days later in Washington, Rollins committed an act so bizarre that it defies comprehension. At a breakfast with reporters, he took to bragging about his victory and launched into a rambling and self-serving peroration that ended with a stunning revelation. He said the Whitman campaign had invested half a million dollars in "walking around money" to suppress the vote in black neighborhoods. The money, he said, went mostly to black ministers, who in return refrained from promoting the Democratic candidate at the pulpit and in civic activities.

All hell broke loose. The Justice Department initiated an investigation. The state of New Jersey launched its own inquiry. The Democratic party vowed to pursue the matter to full disclosure. Rollins found himself interviewed by the FBI for four hours, then sitting before a federal grand jury for seven hours more. He had to answer questions under oath from Democratic party lawyers. He lost his job as an NBC commentator. Outraged black ministers in New

Robert W. Merry, executive editor of Congressional Quarterly, *is the author of* Taking On the World: Joseph and Stewart Alsop—Guardians of the American Century *(Viking).*

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Jersey attacked him, and Whitman and her family disowned him with a fervor born of desperation.

In his sworn testimony he recanted. He said he had made it all up, largely because he wanted to twit his Democratic rival, James Carville, who had run the opposition campaign. Noting that Carville was suffering the agony of a close defeat, he said, "I was trying to make his life miserable for a few weeks." He added, "I spun myself out of control." And in a sentence that probably deserves a prize for spin audacity, he said, "This was an inside-the-Beltway b—s— game that I've become the victim of."

So let's tote up the score here: No laws, it was concluded, were broken. But Rollins proved himself a liar on a grand scale, either in his original remarks or his later sworn testimony. He practically destroyed the budding career of one of his own clients. He brought humiliation to his poor wife, one of the few people in Rollins's book who seem to have any judgment. And he brought upon himself the kind of embarrassment that would make even his many enemies cringe.

So what does he do? Does he slink off to some modern-day equivalent of the New World to lick his wounds and expiate his embarrassment over time? No, he writes this book, in which he complains about how *his client* handled the mess *he* had created. "She could have distanced herself effectively without kicking the corpse so hard," he whines. "I was disappointed. . . . She had every right to cut me loose, but I hadn't expected her to pile it on like that. Too often candidates forget they're not the only ones making sacrifices in a campaign. . . . Goddamnit, I'd helped her win. But I'd watched her discard a longtime associate after the primary, and I guess I was stupid to have expected anything better. I didn't think she could be that ruthless."

Besides, Whitman owed him something for his efforts to keep her husband, whom Rollins portrays as an arrogant fool, away from the hurly-burly of the campaign. "She pleaded with me several times," he writes, "to keep him off her butt."

Michael Ramirez

In fairness, it could be noted that Rollins didn't invent the trash memoir. There has been a trend in this direction for some time, and it's anybody's guess as to just how low it can sink. There was a time, not so long ago, when a certain honor accompanied such writing. The motivation seemed to be to get a jump on history and on any political foes who might be lurking at their own typewriters. These tomes were typically stuffy and self-serving efforts intended to puff up the reputations of their authors before the academics took over the storytelling. But there was almost always some historical value to them, and at times a a great deal. And while old rivalries might re-emerge in the memoirists' pages, ad hominem attacks and mean-spirited portrayals were considered bad form.

Truman's secretary of state, Dean Acheson, waited 17 years after leaving office before penning his memoir, and when it came out *Present at the Creation* offered political perspective, historical breadth, and a detachment of outlook that would have been impossible to achieve had he written earlier in his retirement. And when he had produced the work, 798 pages in length, he went back to the front and wrote a dedication: "To Harry S. Truman: *The captain with the mighty heart.*" It was a display of loyalty to stir the soul.

Probably nobody personifies the transition to the new approach more clearly than James Fallows, once President Carter's chief speechwriter and soon to be editor of *U.S. News & World Report*. At a breakfast with reporters early in the Carter years, Fallows was asked if he were collecting material for a book. No, he replied; he wouldn't write a book on his White House days because it wouldn't be proper to trade on his privileged conversations and experiences there.

He was as good as his word. No book. Instead he wrote a book-length, two-part article in the *Atlantic Monthly* that portrayed Carter, still a sitting president, as a hopeless incompetent. He called the president "insecure at the core." The closer this characterization was to the truth (and it was probably pretty accurate), the more

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it would undermine the poor man in his dealings with political adversaries, not to mention foreign heads of state.

The Reagan years brought a rash of memoir efforts, many of them sleazy. At one point shortly after Reagan left office, 11 former administration employees had weighed in with books on their experiences, many of them published while the man still sat in the Oval Office. Reagan administration secretary of state Al Haig, budget director David Stockman, press secretary Larry Speakes, ambassador Helene A. von Damm, chief of staff Donald Regan—all served, in some degree, to undermine their former boss's effort to lead the nation.

And what was the impulse behind such books? To get rich and get even. That means moving fast, while the publishers still consider you a hot commodity and your enemies are in positions lofty enough to make them vulnerable to embarrassment. Ed Rollins, for example, is reliably reported to have received more than $1 million to produce *Bare Knuckles and Back Rooms*.

All this is related to another development in American politics—the rise of the paladin politico and the corollary decline of political loyalty. In the days of party bosses and political patronage, it was considered natural that the spoils should go to the victors and that those with the power would reward their friends and punish their enemies. The old system certainly could lead to some unsavory practices, but it also generated strong feelings of political loyalty. Step out of line, and you would be cut adrift for life.

That system is gone, destroyed by the waves of reform that swept over American politics in the late 1960s and 70s. Instead of Mayor Daley's intricate network of power arrangements and mutual commitments, we have a rising breed of political professionals, consultants for hire who flit from campaign to campaign, dispensing their technical knowledge and often amassing considerable wealth in the process. If they're good at PR, they might even get a network contract for regular air time, which makes them famous and enhances their income potential through speaking engagements.

It isn't surprising that political loyalty isn't high among the traits to be found in such people. Nor is it surprising that many of them come to view themselves as the real repository of political wisdom in America, to believe that the candidates they advise are merely the vehicles that they must ride—often with considerable disgust—in order to make the wheels of democracy turn smoothly. It takes a man or woman of considerable character to resist these temptations of behavior and outlook.

IT ISN'T SURPRISING THAT ROLLINS WOULD BE THE CONSULTANT TO BRING THE ART OF THE MEMOIR TO A NEW LOW.

Which brings us back to Ed Rollins, whose inability to resist these temptations is all too evident in his own prose. It isn't really very surprising that, among the legions of political consultants swarming over the political landscape these days, Rollins would be the one to bring the art of the political memoirist to a new low. His flaws and self-deceptions are well marked in his book, although the better insights are often found between the lines rather than in the self-congratulatory spin that suffuses the writing.

For example, he seeks to portray himself as a young innocent, influenced in his early years primarily by the simple verities he learned from his parents at home in Vallejo, California, "a scruffy, scrappy, lunch-pail kind of place that has zero tolerance for anyone with pretensions." His Boston Irish parents had moved to Vallejo after World War II, and his father worked in the huge town shipyard as an electrician. He had met Ed's mother, a red-haired beauty, at age 19 and never dated anyone else.

With abundant overtime, Rollins senior made enough money to buy a $7,000 tract house with three bedrooms, a single bathroom, and a flat roof. It was a bit cramped for a family with five children, but they all took pride in their little home. And it was a house of strong values and high moral instruction. At the kids' Catholic school, the nuns' discipline was always supported at home. Ed's father taught him "two great life lessons": honesty and humility. Don't lie and don't brag.

Ed, never much of a student, developed into a kind of street tough. He was strong, muscular, and very athletic, and he loved to fight. He and his friends engaged in street brawls with the Marines sent into town for combat training. "You could get hurt badly, but you didn't get killed," he recalls. Soon he was heavily involved in amateur boxing, which began a life in which he routinely violated his father's stricture against lying.

Rollins's coach put him in the ring against military boxers at the naval station at Treasure Island, even though he was under the legal age of 18. Rollins facilitated the illegal ruse by assuming an alias. Later, although he declined to turn pro, he allowed his trainer to fight him for money and pay him under the table so he could retain his amateur status. Thousands of dollars in illegal bets were placed on his fights.

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As a student at California State University at Chico, sidelined as a boxer because of injuries, Rollins gravitated to the political game. He got an internship with Jesse "Big Daddy" Unruh, the legendary speaker of the California assembly whose remarkable political reign rested upon the cynical assumption that all men could be bought—or at least rented for a time.

Later, after he went to work for a Republican state legislator named Ray Johnson, Rollins learned what Unruh already knew. Johnson once threw three lobbyists out of his office for trying to give him cash for his reelection campaign. But later, after enjoying a heady Hollywood evening at the Oscars courtesy of another set of lobbyists, he shelved a piece of pet legislation that those lobbyists found offensive.

"Ray Johnson, Mr. Integrity," Rollins writes of his most important early mentor, "had his price. . . . I think he rented out for two tickets to the Oscars and probably didn't even realize it. I found myself wondering if *I* had a price, and whether I'd know it when the time came."

Apparently not. Just a few paragraphs earlier, he tells of how the Sacramento lobbyists routinely picked up the food and booze tabs for staffers such as himself. Moreover, "If I wanted to go to Lake Tahoe for gambling and a show, tickets and complimentary hotel rooms were always available."

So we see Rollins, from his midteens onward, as a man on the make, ever vigilant for the main chance. Whether it was fighting illegally, taking boxing money under the table, or accepting expensive Las Vegas accommodations from lobbyists, he has ever manifested a certain moral obtuseness.

His main chance in national politics came through his association with longtime Reagan operative Lyn Nofziger. When Nofziger became White House political director in Reagan's first year as president, he appointed Rollins his deputy. A year later he succeeded to Nofziger's job, and a year after that he became director of Reagan's reelection campaign. In recounting his exploits as campaign manager, Rollins seems a bit like the flea that thinks it is steering the dog.

Rollins gained a reputation as a pugnacious politico with loads of street smarts and people smarts. But there was something troubling about the way he operated. He had a penchant for saying embarrassing things to reporters and then lying about the circumstances to cover up. In an interview with Leo Rennert of the *Sacramento Bee*, he ridiculed Reagan's daughter, Maureen, who was planning an ill-conceived run for a California Senate seat. When that ruffled feathers in the first family and the office of White House chief of staff James Baker, Rollins said he had spoken to Rennert off the record, not for publication. Rennert calls that allegation, which is a serious slur on his professional integrity, "totally untrue."

HE HAD A HABIT OF SAYING EMBARRASSING THINGS TO REPORTERS AND THEN LYING ABOUT IT TO COVER UP.

In fact, the book is a catalogue of slurs on just about everyone who came into contact with Rollins over the years. Ronald Reagan is spared, as are a few others. But generally the only really worthy character in the book is Rollins himself. He is the hero of nearly every scene, except when he is trying to explain away some well-known gaffe or act of stupidity from his past. In dialogue that sounds like it's from some awful, overdramatized movie, he dresses down U.S. senators, top government officials, and the president of the mob-connected Teamsters union. Only one person can intimidate him, and that's Nancy Reagan, who is portrayed as a self-obsessed, bitchy, conniving tyrant.

Even after his Whitman fiasco, Rollins still managed to get hired by Michael and Arianna Huffington—for a significant amount of money, according to reports—to help with Michael's 1994 Senate race in California. He writes that he was advised by many friends—and the ever-wise Sherrie—to stay away from them. But he plunged into the race anyway, only to discover that his friends had been right. Oh well, the Huffingtons make good fodder for his introductory chapter. They were "craven," and "beyond contempt." He was ashamed to be associated with them: "The magnitude of Arianna Huffington's lust for power was beyond the pale even for me." Her use of private investigators in the campaign was lower than anything he had seen in politics, even the time when he "learned" that a prominent Washington lobbyist had pocketed a $10 million illegal campaign contribution from a foreign government . . .

But wait! Is Rollins saying here that hiring a campaign gumshoe is lower on the order of sleaze than illegally absconding with $10 million? Isn't he an accessory after the fact to a serious felony? Has he reported this to the authorities? Or perhaps he really doesn't know whether this episode actually took place. But, if that's the case, why did he include it in the book, thus maligning just about everyone in the small group of people who could possibly be the culprit?

It appears that this is just another example of reckless abandon on the part of Ed Rollins, all too typical of this book. He doesn't care

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who gets hurt or who might be unfairly maligned. The money's too good, the revenge too sweet.

And so we come to the crux of this story: Ed Rollins, from the age of about 15, should have made a greater effort to live a life like that of his father and to follow that good man's sound advice about lying and bragging. Had he done so, surely he wouldn't have in the bank the million dollars or so that this book has brought him. But he might have a sense of honor—something that, for the remainder of his life, will forever elude him. ♦

Music

Kronos Disease

By Jay Nordlinger

Unlike its sister disciplines, classical music has been spared a fixation on politics. Paintings and sculptures may be more political than artistic, and novels and poems more political than literary. But music, dwelling in its otherworld of notes and modulation and rhythm, has been able to sail on. Composers can make their work shapeless, banal, or perverse. But they are hard-pressed to render it explicitly political.

John Corigliano, for example, is free to nickname his Symphony No. 1 "The AIDS Symphony," but it remains for the listener to determine what the piece is "about"—if it is "about" anything, since music need not have a recognizable program, and seldom does. Shostakovich may have inscribed "A Response to Just Criticism" on the title page of his fifth symphony in 1937—Stalin's government had been offended by his previous work—but the score that follows is only ignorantly construed as a tribute to the Soviet state.

If you happen to be hungry for the Stalin-era spirit expressed in music, you have to turn to the Kronos Quartet and its latest recording, *Howl, U.S.A.* (Nonesuch, 79372-2). The Kronos is among the most famous chamber ensembles in the world, concertizing on all continents and garnering near-universal critical praise. According to *Billboard*, it sells more recordings than does any other string quartet.

The Kronos-ers are routinely described in the press as "risk-taking" and "avant-garde," meaning that they (a) eschew traditional (i.e., great) repertoire, (b) dress informally, and (c) champion new music that is charitably dubbed "experimental." They are indeed a magnet and boon to the contemporary composer, commissioning generously and receiving thousands of unsolicited manuscripts in the mail.

With every year and every trip to the studio, the group endeavors to get avant-garder, and its politics are increasingly worn on its sleeve. Here are arrangements of Jimi Hendrix and Frank Zappa; there is a work christened "The Peace Piece"; royalties are sent to the trendiest foundations. And the Kronos-ers are no garden-variety left-liberals. Asked to recommend a book to the public, founder and first violinist David Harrington cited *The Managua Lectures* by totalitarian academic Noam Chomsky, "so amazingly riveting that I can hardly tear myself away from it." "It is startling and shocking and all the things that go into a major experience. . . . As a musician, I trust my ears, and this book definitely has the ring of truth." With the politics-choked *Howl, U.S.A.*, Harrington and his partners seem to have reached their limit.

The cover of the album features a photo of a tattered American flag. The photographer? Robert Mapplethorpe, and no image ever more accurately portrayed an album's contents. The recording begins with "Sing Sing: J. Edgar Hoover" by Michael Daugherty. If you think the late FBI chief has been sufficiently demonized, you haven't seen anything yet: Lillian Hellman's harshest indictment is child's play by comparison. Daugherty has taken tapes of Hoover's speeches, extracted choice sentences and words, toyed with them mischievously, and apposed them to other sounds, some of which emanate from a string quartet.

The piece opens with Hoover's unaccompanied voice, stating the composer's purpose: "I hope that this presentation will serve to give to you a better knowledge and a deeper understanding of your FBI." Then phones ring and ambulances wail. The quartet enters, menacingly, and it is clear that this is *Gestapomusik*: martial and intense. The noise-pastiche is meant to suggest chaos, a society out of control. "We are as close to you as your telephone," Hoover is saying, and we are trapped in Amerika. The letters "F-B-I" are chanted over and over (by whom?), as Hoover continues to intone "*your* FBI, *your* FBI." The music is crude and dissonant and crazed—like that heard in movies when horrible, incomprehensible injustices are being done to heroes.

Suddenly, the FBI is making an arrest: "Get your hands up!" Apparently the suspect is not cooperating. There is gunfire, and the music ceases. "The charge is murder," a voice says, and this is the composer's charge, really, against the Bureau.

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Next there is ticking—relentless, maddening—along with piquant strings. "Look at your watch this morning," Hoover tells an audience, illustrating the frequency of crime. But *we* know who the real criminal is, of course. Hoover's phrases—commonplace in their natural settings—are repeated endlessly, thickening an Orwellian fog. A radio announcer cuts in: The Director is to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee. A military band plays a patriotic march, on a crackling old recording; the quartet joins in, first straightforwardly, then lapsing into mocking disharmony (a technique perfected by modern Russian composers like Prokofiev).

Fragments of Hoover's testimony are heard, the key Scoundrel Time epithets highlighted: "communism," "the enemy," "Nikita Khrushchev," "deadly menace," "Communists and their dupes." The quartet insinuates a distorted quotation from "My Country, 'tis of Thee."

"The time has come for Americans to wake up!" Hoover exhorts, and what can the common man do? "A lot." With that, citizens are put to work spying on one another, and no one is safe. An old typewriter clatters—tappety, tappety—as a file is prepared on some innocent. The quartet responds with little upward glissandi, annoying and intended to be. Hoover laments that "more young people appear to know the words of popular soap jingles than the meaningful words of "The Star-Spangled Banner," and here the composer has his excuse to ride the national anthem all the way to the end. An old-timey crowd sings it (perhaps at a ballgame), the quartet provides sinister counterpoint, and all the while Hoover cries "Brainwashed!" and "Fear!" The phrase "home of the brave" is presented as a terrible irony. At the climax, it is "Fear! fear! fear!," then more gunfire—bang-bang-bang—then Hoover: "I thank you" (probably the close of his HUAC testimony).

For all its lunacy, "Sing Sing" is a rather brilliantly conceived, surprisingly effective . . . creation. Is it a work of music? It is agitprop, certainly, but is it music, too, or a political diatribe garnished with musical commentary, or a Fantasy for Two Violins, Viola, Cello, and Hoover Splicings? What it is is fodder for the Kronos Quartet—commissioned by Lincoln Center—and unlike much of anything else.

Except, that is, for the other pieces on the album. Scott Johnson's "Cold War Suite" has a speaking voice, too, but it is far from a villain's: It belongs to the late leftist journalist I.F. Stone, and he is uttering his holy words: about "the secret network" that makes honest Americans afraid, the iniquity of Reagan-administration policy in Central America, the danger of nuclear weapons (particularly those owned by the United States). The quartet aims to imitate, or collaborate with, Stone's voice in pitch, intonation, cadence, and rhythm. But it doesn't take long for the music to seem an interference rather than an enhancement. It's as though you're listening to some atonal string quartet composed by a promising high-school senior for a college entrance exam, and someone has inadvertently left the radio or television on. You want to holler, "Hey! Could you turn something off—preferably the stereo?"

THE QUARTET ENTERS DARKLY, AND IT IS CLEAR THAT THIS IS *GESTAPOMUSIK*: MARTIAL AND INTENSE.

The album concludes with Lee Hyla's "Howl," which uses the famous poem of Allen Ginsberg, one of the most important in recent American literature. The piece is different from the first two in that there is less—in fact, no—doctoring of tape: The poet reads his work straight (if that's the right word). The music is simply accompaniment—not more or less—to the poet's recitation.

In the days of silent movies, the larger houses employed organists who improvised accompaniments to the action on screen (minor keys and tremolos for the black hats, bright, triumphal odes for the white hats, soupy melodies for the kissing). Hyla attempts to do much the same here for "Howl," but Ginsberg's recitation is already complete, unimprovable. The quartet, without the recitation, would be purposeless; but the recitation, without the quartet, would be liberated. The piece was commissioned for the Kronos-ers by the National Endowment for the Arts "in partnership" with the Lila Wallace *Reader's Digest* Fund. Allen Ginsberg and Annie Sprinkle, meet Ward and June Cleaver!

Howl, U.S.A. is an atypical recording of atypical music performed by an atypical string quartet. It can therefore be dismissed—or enjoyed—as anomalous. Musical life is not immediately threatened by the infection of politics, because most musicians are still more interested in music than in the extra-musical, or the anti-musical. Nonetheless, it's a pity that the Kronos Quartet should descend into the fever swamp, because it plays extraordinarily well, and while the world has more than enough political ideologues, it does not suffer from a surfeit of first-rate chamber groups. If the Kronos-ers were merely a bunch of radicalized mediocrities, coasting on the arts dole, their obsessions would be simply risible—instead of sharply disappointing. ♦

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Bill Clinton to regulate tobacco as a drug.
—*News Item*

Parody

Protect & Serve — Washington, DC

METROPOLITAN POLICE DEPARTMENT

PATROL DIVISION: INCIDENT REPORT #34332

■ Subject's Name: John Brough	■ Date: 4/5/2002	■ Time: 1857
■ Charges: illegal possession and ingestion of tobacco-based nicotine product	■ Location: 400 block 3rd Street SE	
■ Sex/Race/DOB: M | 1 | 28 | 61	■ Contraband Recovered: one (1) pack Marrboro, matches, mints	

■ Description:

While on patrol, Officer L.L. Beann observed White Male in late 40s, stout build, wearing suit and tie, walking toward D Street SE. Also observed white cylindrical object in or about subject's mouth with what appeared to be smoke issuing therefrom.

As undersigned officer pulled to curb, WM subject began to run south on 3rd Street. Believing reasonable cause to suspect WM of cigarette smoking, officer left car in pursuit on foot. Subject quickly overtaken, panting heavily. As officer approached WM was observed to throw object behind nearby hedge.

Suspect denied he had been smoking cigarette. However, reporting officer recovered discarded object -- red-and-white box marked "Marrboro." Officer visually identified this as a cigarette pack of type being smuggled in from China and for which lookout has been issued at roll calls.

WM identified himself as John Brough, staff member of Senate Agriculture Committee, and produced ID. Informed he was being placed under arrest, Brough then claimed items in the "Marrboro" box were not tobacco but marijuana. However, contents tested positive for tobacco with field-test kit. Nicotine breathalyzer confirmed.

Subject admitted information to be correct and was informed that he was liable to 5 years in prison under "Three Puffs and You're Extinguished" law. Sgt. C.L. Zbeyxcyski ordered suspect taken before U.S. Tobacco Magistrate.

Subject began to cry, saying wife and two children in Bethesda would be disgraced and he would be ruined. Begged to be let off with stipulation that he enroll immediately in therapy and community service. Informed this was up to magistrate, subject became unruly and tried to butt undersigned officer.

Cuffed and placed in patrol car, subject cursed officer as "fascist swine." But then, in mood swing of the type described in operation manual, said he would cooperate and provide names of other cigarette smokers on Capitol Hill and at least one high White House staff member (copy of this report forwarded to Nic-Narc unit and U.S. attorney for follow-up).

"Marrboro" pack placed in evidence room, along with two paper packages of matches, six left in one and the other apparently unused, plus roll of breath mints.

Reporting officer then responded to two homicides, three bank robberies, and a plane crash in Potomac reported during tobacco apprehension.

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Seeing vitamin E in a new light

While you may know that vitamin E could reduce the effects of aging, inhibit some types of cancer, and reduce the risk of heart attacks, here's something you may not know: some types of vitamin E are more potent than others.

Natural-source vitamin E, the kind produced from soybeans, is 36% more bioavailable than synthetic vitamin E.

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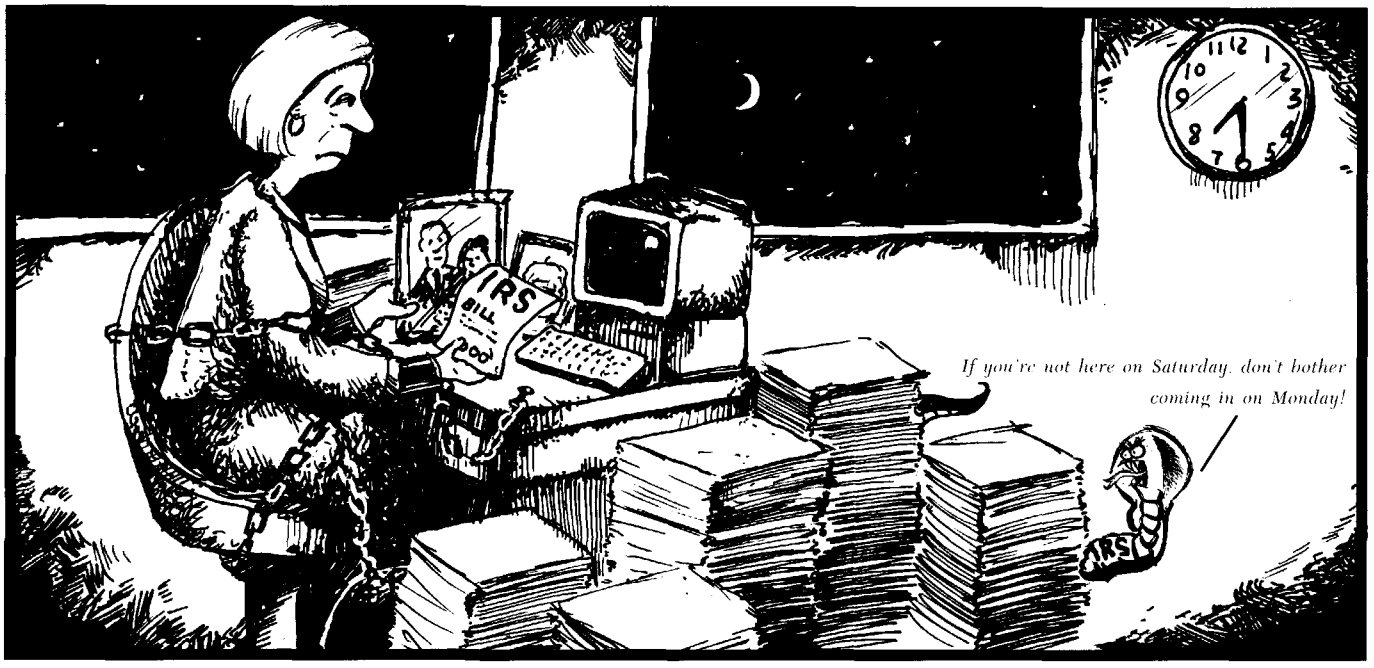

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Our income tax chains mothers to a job — and threatens our right to economic liberty.

While we argue about taxing the rich, nobody ever defines who the rich really are. According to the IRS, that definition was an annual income of $5 million in 1940. By 1992, that moved down scale to a very blue-collar $52,500. As the debate over making sure the rich pay their "fair" share rages on, we are ignoring the impact of rising taxation upon the American working *family*.

It now takes two incomes to support a family at a standard which once required only one income just 30 years ago. In the process our national debt has exploded and we have nothing to show for it.

Like citizens of Rome, we lose democratic *and* economic freedoms through taxes.

Democracy was once the light of economic freedom — the way out of serfdom where the state took 50 percent of your earnings. Today, that economic freedom is lost with the state extracting nearly 40 percent of the income from the average American family. It was only 25 percent in the 1960s! In Rome, it was obvious. Tax laws chained you to your profession and your location, the better to find you to collect Caesar's due.

Many women today are chained to their jobs because they lost their economic freedom to stay home and raise their children during early, formative years. If we truly care about the people of this nation and our future, we must honestly look at the impact of big government and the rising demands for taxation upon our middle class.

Mothers always pay for the foolishness of governments.

War is only the most common example. In government's all consuming quest to promise more to voters — mothers, women, and the American family have come out the losers. When we enslave that segment of society, our prosperity collapses like Rome, Spain, Russia, and so many others that have gone before us.

Promise freedom. Deliver serfdom.

History warns that economic decay has always been created by the extravagance of the state and in its wake inevitably follows social decay and rising crime. Only a fool ignores the lessons of history and that is why it tends so often to repeat.

We have a rare and brief moment in time — perhaps our last window of opportunity to reflect and change the course of posterity. To ignore the warnings of history, after the social and economic decay we have witnessed in the past 30 years, is to invite the fate suffered by all previous democracies — suicide. Society will be torn apart unless the taxation demands upon the American family are not tempered and controlled. If we do not restore economic freedom to the American family, we will become a mere footnote in the annals of the 21st century.

For more information on the Princeton Proposal for tax reform & economic growth, contact:

Princeton Economic Institute
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